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AUSTRALIA'S WILDERNESS ADVENTURE MAGAZINE

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# Departments

## 5 Editorial

Tiger walker under attack!

## 11 Wildfire

Letters to the Editor

## 17 Info



BASEjumping Australians in Utah and beyond

## 19 Wild Diary

What's on, and when

## 36 Folio



Nepal through the lens of Matt Darby

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## 54 Track Notes



Mt Jagungal—the peak at the heart of the Kosciuszko National Park, by Trevor Lewis

## 60 Track Notes



A classic Bogong High Plains circuit, by Stephen Curtin

## 65 Gear Survey 1

Down sleeping-bags,  
by Stephen Curtin



## 71 Gear Survey 2



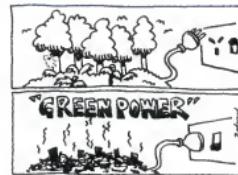
Lightweight meals,  
by Michael Hampton

## 77 Equipment

Go wild and woolly



## 79 Green Pages



Do you know what you're getting when you buy 'green power'?

## 83 Reviews

From the *Ice Trek* controversy to balmy New South Wales walking guides

## 88 Wild Shot



Brigitte gets the once-over from the experts

Cover Justin Clark  
getting some big  
air, Castle Hill,  
New Zealand.  
Clark collection

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## Features

### 20 The Overland Track in Winter

It takes more than an earthquake and an avalanche to slow down  
*Monica Chapman*

20



### 24 Cradle Mountain the Hard Way

When being 'feminine' is more trouble than it's worth,  
*by Robyn Cooper*

### 26 There Are Many Peaks, My Friend

Trekking in the Karakoram is not for the faint-hearted,  
*by Andrew Gregory*

### 32 John Mayston Béchervaise

*Brian Walters profiles an Australian outdoors legend*

26



### 40 Ettrema Gorge and Beyond

A New South Wales bushwalk with a bit more of everything than anyone bargained for,  
*by Sven Klinge*

32



### 46 Ski-touring the Victorian Alps

#### Ski Tracks on the Crosscut Saw

*By Anthony and James Brown*

#### Where to go

*Scott Edwards reviews the playgrounds of Victorian skiing*

40



46



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See walking-boot survey, Wild no 28, 1988, pages 51-65

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# An assault on outdoors records

Australia's 'tiger walker' extraordinaire under attack

**PETER TRESEDER ISN'T A STRANGER TO WILD** readers. For much of *Wild's* 20-year history his innumerable and extraordinary endurance feats (mostly done alone) have been reported in detail in its pages, and have left readers gasping. Well-known Australian wilderness historian Klaus Huenemeier profiled him in *Wild* no 24, and leading Australian outdoors writer Quentin Chester also profiled him in *Wild* no 51. In the early days it is unlikely that his fame extended beyond *Wild* readers, and a relatively small number of Sydney bushwalkers—many of his early record-breaking feats took place in their 'backyard', the Blue Mountains. In recent years Treseder has come to the attention of the general public through extensive publicity of his far-ranging exploits—from places as diverse as Borneo and the South Pole—and his motivational lectures. Treseder became a sought after public speaker; his many speaking venues included two appearances at Escalade, the now-defunct climbing festival held every two years in the Blue Mountains, New South Wales. Now something of a public figure, Treseder was awarded the Order of Australia (OAM) in 1992; he has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for charity, is the subject of a biography and has enjoyed the public support of the Prime Minister.

All this changed with the publication of the May 2001 issue of *Inside Sport* magazine. Once you get past the mountainous bosoms of the cover girl, the heading beside her barely covered crutch proclaims: **THE FRAUD:** How Australia's leading 'adventurer' hoodwinked a nation.' The article in question, under the byline of *Inside Sport's* Deputy Editor Graem Sims, examines a number of Peter Treseder's claims and concludes that he is 'a fraud who has hoodwinked a nation'. If that is the case, you can include me and other outdoors people who have worked at *Wild* over the years among the 'hoodwinked'. Presumably also *Australian Geographic* magazine, which three times has awarded him its Spirit of Adventure Silver Medal, along with the rest of the nation.

What is the basis of *Inside Sport's* claim? While acknowledging that Treseder is an extraordinary Australian who has undoubtedly performed many endurance feats in the company of others, it argues that many of his solo exploits are so extreme as to be incredible. Treseder's claim to have run the entire length of the Great Dividing Range from Cape York, Queensland, to Wilsons Promontory, Victoria, in three stages, in a total travel time of 41 days, comes in for particularly detailed scrutiny. It concludes that the claim is so unlikely (by comparison with fully supported ultra-distance runs on tracks and roads) as to be ludicrous.

Treseder's claimed solo rescue of a young woman in Clastral Canyon, in the Blue Moun-

tains, is examined in detail and ridiculed as being impossible (for him *and* for her; *Inside Sport* argues that she could not have survived the conditions that search-and-rescue expert Treseder describes). Treseder's claim that it was raining at the time is also refuted by *Inside Sport*, which states that this is not supported by an examination of meteorology records. But most outdoors people will have had experiences of extremely localised rainfall, which may not have been registered by the Bureau of Meteorology.

**'Once you get past the  
mountainous bosoms of the  
cover girl, the heading beside  
her barely covered crutch  
proclaims: "THE FRAUD..."'**

The article quotes well-known author Richard Flanagan as saying that he believes Treseder's claim to have rafted Tasmania's Franklin River in 26 hours and 4 minutes in a 'rubber ducky' to be physically impossible. (*Inside Sport* reports that Flanagan has descended the river 40 times, including a descent by kayak in a record 19 hours' paddling time.) But is this proof? Was it not considered a few weeks ago that the survival of Ben Maloney in the Tasmanian wilderness for 37 days, most of them without food, was also 'impossible'?

If some of Treseder's solo exploits are such patent nonsense as *Inside Sport* claims, why have they taken so long to be exposed, and how was someone not widely recognised as an authority in Australian wilderness activities, such as *Inside Sport's* Deputy Editor, able to ask all the right questions, then research and verify the answers? To respond to the second question first: he didn't. The article was based on research initially done (and offered to *Inside Sport*) by Lucas Trihey, the organiser of Escalade, the festival referred to above, at which Treseder was a guest speaker on two occasions. After Treseder's second Escalade appearance he was to be paid a fee of about \$150. It was subsequently agreed that Trihey would write an article about Treseder in lieu of this payment. The article did not appear. Trihey says that this was because it was a 'very loose arrangement', which was left up in the air and not followed up, and that Treseder had said that remuneration was not a priority for him.

The answer to the first question is more complex. First, there is a long tradition of taking outdoors people at their word when they report their achievements. Unless there are

specific reasons to doubt them, claims are not normally questioned. Nor has history often shown reason to do so. Secondly, many of Treseder's feats are hard to evaluate unless you have knowledge of the terrain involved and make a detailed study of each claim. We don't recall receiving serious questions about Treseder's feats reported in *Wild*—with only two exceptions. Both were from credible and knowledgeable south-east Queensland-based outdoors people. They questioned Treseder's claims with regard to one or two runs in that region, wondering whether it was possible to do what Treseder asserted in the time he claimed, and because of perceived vagueness and inconsistencies in Treseder's accounts of the undertakings when he was questioned about them. Neither was prepared to air these doubts publicly. One of them wrote to us at the time—six years ago—enclosing a letter he'd written to Treseder raising doubts, and asking questions, about two of Treseder's runs in south-east Queensland. His letter to us concludes: This letter to you is not to suggest that you take action in any way because...it boils down to my word against Peter's. I am simply writing to you with information...which may have implications in the future.' We have no record of having received further information on the matter over the next six years. The correspondent quoted above has written to us since the publication of the *Inside Sport* article criticising *Wild* for publishing reports from Treseder 'without any attempt at validation'. In the absence of any questioning—apart from that noted earlier; and in that case because we did not hear anything further in six years, it was not considered necessary to attempt such validation. (Remember, conclusive proof that some of Treseder's claims have been false is yet to be forthcoming.) Thirdly, and most importantly, Treseder has many extraordinary achievements to his name that can be verified—a fact acknowledged by *Inside Sport*.

The *Inside Sport* article raises a number of valid questions and some serious doubts, but is short on substantiation. Where the serious claim of fraud is made, one would expect at least some direct proof. However, I agree that some of the doubts raised call for an explanation from Treseder. Considering the subject in question (solo adventures in remote locations), it is necessary to obtain proof—however difficult that may be—before dismissing Treseder's claims. Even then, great care would have to be taken not to generalise unfairly or recklessly about other Treseder claims for which no such adequate proof is obtained. Two observations might be made: First, some of Treseder's solo records, including the Cape York to Wilsons Promontory run, had ample support from personnel, not referred to in

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# Wild

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the *Inside Sport* article, which might assist in the verification of Treseder's records. Secondly, the New South Wales outdoors community appears to be swinging in behind Treseder in a remarkable show of confidence.

Tall poppies have no shortage of detractors, and in his chosen field Treseder stands alone. Either way he cannot win. If some of the claims against him are proven he will not only be personally disgraced and lose his ability to raise both sponsorship for future adventures and money for charity, but all his solo records—including those in respect of which there is no reasonable doubt—are likely to be discredited. It would not be easy for

Treseder to satisfy his critics about the validity of all his claimed solo records. As happened in the case of the brilliant Slovenian mountaineer Tomo Cesen, in the absence of hard and fast evidence, some mud will stick and he may fade gradually from view, into a life of virtual exile in a shadowy 'middle kingdom' between unquestioned acceptance and adulation on the one hand, and public disgrace on the other, but closer to the latter. Either way, while it is obviously a serious setback for Treseder, it is scarcely less so for Australian wilderness adventure activities generally. 

Chris Baxter

## Wild bash

*Wild* staff and friends gathered in Melbourne on 15 March to help Tim Macartney-Snape launch the 20th anniversary special issue. Here are a few snaps of the happy throng. All photos Rosie Johnson collection.



**Above, party animals:** Lucy Monie (incoming Editor), left, Greg Caire (contributor), Emma Webb (Advertising Manager), Michael Hampton (Contributing Editor), and Naomi Peters (outgoing Editor).



**Above, I don't mind if I do,** says Editorial Coordinator Rosie Johnson, left. 'Sure beats bush tucker,' says Contributing Editor John Chapman. **Right,** Managing Editor Chris Baxter rouses the troops while fellow Wild Director, Brian Walters, nods off in the background.

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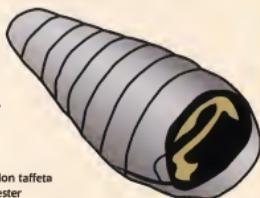
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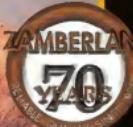
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I've always seen *Wild* as a magazine with a soul. You've been clear in your environmental philosophy, your spirit of adventure and your unwavering understanding that to make it all work, you've got to be running a profitable enterprise... Fan-bloody-tastic!

Howard Whelan  
Publisher/Editor in Chief  
*Australian Geographic*  
(by email)

...It's a tribute to *Wild*'s dedicated management and staff that *Wild* is still going strong after 20 years—no mean feat in a country where magazines come and go all the time. I'm a regular *Wild* reader myself and always enjoy it.

Congratulations on the great standard you have set and may you continue to be successful.

Dick Smith  
Terrey Hills, NSW

Thank you for your letter received today concerning our 20 years of subscription to *Wild*. Not only have we maintained our subscription since the original gift from a librarian sister but we still have every one of them—faithfully packed and transported through several moves from house to house. Most are now well read and a little ragged but they are still occasionally brought out from the back of the cupboard in search of a reference or topic.

Although family and work commitments do not afford the availability of time for the bush that we had 20 years ago, we have maintained the subscription both on account of the quality and interest of the magazine, and fundamental support for the concept you have espoused.

Please accept our long overdue acknowledgement of the great efforts of you, your team and contributors and supporters. You can continue to rely on the support of our subscription for a long time to come.

Jim and Mary Shaw  
(by email)

...Congratulations on 20 great years of *Wild*... *Wild* provides us all with hours of pleasure and dreaming. We relive all the wonderful wild places through others' experiences... I particularly enjoyed your reflective articles in the anniversary issue of *Wild* about production and advertisements. We also identify with your passion about conserving our declining forests and wild places in general, so keep up the standards you have in place, they give *Wild* the quality edge and allow us, the readers, to feel we share some of the contribution you make to this great country. We look forward to another decade or two of *Wild*.

Jen Wilkinson  
(by email)

possibly Paddy Pallin, and I thought this is exactly what I want! Before that we had relied on club newsletters and product information brochures from manufacturers to get information on bushwalking... The articles, 'Doing the Dash' and 'Across the Alps' in *Wild* no 80 are inspirational.

Martin Bouman  
Ermington, NSW

...It has certainly been interesting to see the development of the magazine over the years. I bushwalk when I can and love it—I wish I could do more. *Wild* makes up for it in many ways! I congratulate you on the success of the magazine—well and truly deserved.

All the best and happy 20th!  
Michael Loughlin  
(by email)

...Please have a drink on my behalf to toast you all and thanks to everyone for being so supportive of the East Gippsland forests.

Well done, *Wild*!

Jill Redwood  
(by email)

Congratulations on reaching your 20th anniversary of *Wild*. Issue 80 is fantastic indeed!

We have thoroughly enjoyed every article in it, particularly Tyrone Thomas' with whom we walked many times when members of the Melbourne Bushwalkers in the 1970s...

Barbara Bryan  
(by email)

What a magazine!

What can I say that hasn't been said dozens of times by other readers? Your mag is a 'must have' for anyone even remotely interested in bushwalking... I couldn't do without my regular hit of *Wild*!

Peter Ball  
(by email)

## Go for it

...I wish to comment on the letter from Jeremy Whelan in Wildfire, *Wild* no 79 in relation to the Editorial in issue 77... an Editorial is the place to make comment such as that made. After all, an Editorial is not reporting or a research article, it is comment and opinion from the Editor. I believe that someone in a position such as the Editor of *Wild* must make comment such as this, otherwise who is to make the comment?



Thank you for your letter acknowledging 20 years continuous subscription to *Wild*... It is pleasing that a successful publishing venture like *Wild* has been able to maintain its independence for 20 years and that the highest standards set in past years seem to be surpassed with each new issue.

I am pleased to enclose my subscription renewal for another three years. We hope that by God's grace we will still be subscribers when the 40th anniversary edition is published.

Bruce Bartlett  
Macgregor, ACT

I remember seeing advertising for the first *Wild* in one of Sydney's camping stores,



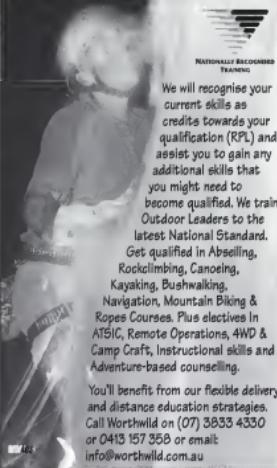
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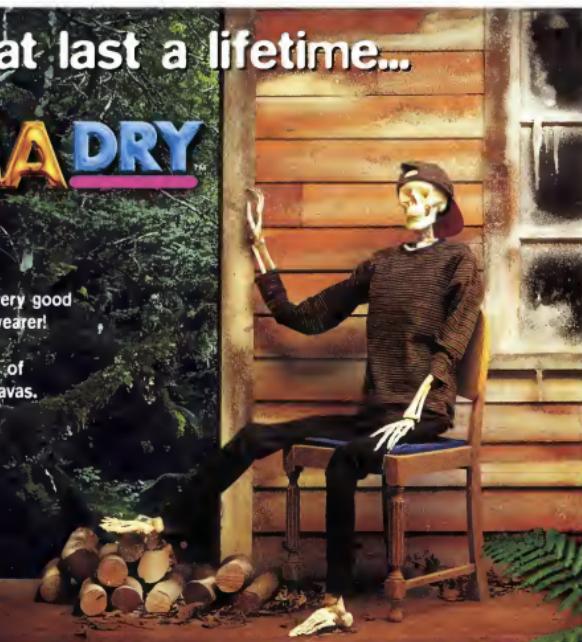
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*Wild* is much more than a bushwalking magazine... it is about stimulating the imagination and adventurous spirit in us. The magazine takes us to South Georgia, Nepal and the deserts, and gives us a taste of what many will never get a chance to do. It also gives us the nuts and bolts to local bushwalks. If people do not speak out, then who will protect our wild areas for us, for our children and grandchildren?

Go for it, Chris Baxter.

Chris Macfarlane  
(by email)

Jeremy Whelan's response (*Wildfire, Wild no 79*) to Chris Baxter's Editorial is so typical of what's wrong with the 'scared' element among our 'gentle' people... These cravens pretending to be 'sensible' and 'balanced' have no real conception of the absolute bastards we activists and volunteers are up against... If Jeremy Whelan had any bottle whatever then he would get out in a part of our bush that's about to be devastated and raped by some bloated pig of a 'developer' and then when he got savagely mugged by a hired moronic gang of red-neck vandal muggers perhaps he might wax lyrical!

Most likely he would scamper off to some 'safe' place with nice paths, toilets, fast-food huts, water spigots and concrete car parks and litter bins... Personally I want to stir shit out of the bastards... I say 'Go for it, Baxter baby'. In my 12 years as a Ranger and 25 as a photo-journalist, being nice never got any results but loud stirring and ...making fence sitters' feel uncomfortable... does get some concessions... Jeremy you [expletive deleted]! Editor get out there and holler.

Barry Turner  
Blairgowrie, Vic

### Ansett hits the bottle

I write this letter to inform fellow bushwalkers of problems they may encounter when travelling by air to holiday destinations. I was one of a party of walkers travelling to Tasmania to do the South Coast Track walk from Melaleuca to Cockle Creek. Being well aware of the restriction of carrying fuel on board passenger aircraft we had all made sure our stoves and fuel bottles were completely dry of fuel and had made arrangements to purchase fuel from a stockpile at Melaleuca.

On checking in our rucksacks for our flight to Hobart on Ansett Airlines we were questioned as to whether we were carrying stoves. We were informed that the only way we could take this equipment was to have the items shipped as freight (even though the items were completely dry of fuel). This was going to cost an extra \$50 and special packaging. Because there was not enough time to get the items down to the freight terminal we ended up having to throw the Trangia burners and fuel containers in the bin and board the flight. As the walk was not possible without stoves (fires not being permitted at camp-sites) we then had to

madly rush into Hobart to buy new burners and bottles before connecting with our flight to Melaleuca.

All the other airlines that I contacted... do allow carriage of these items in your rucksack as long as they are completely dry. Some recommend that you blow the containers and burners with compressed air from a service station or perhaps a more practical method would be to leave the empty items overnight in front of a central-heating duct with the lids off...

Barney Wursthorn  
Prahran, Vic

### Memory lane

I enjoyed Elaine Chesworth's article on Mumbetah Creek (*Wild* no 79). I had a six-year stopover in Australia in the 1950s *en route* from the UK to New Zealand and walked regularly. In those days active walkers often belonged to two clubs to get a better trip selection. There were also many private trips. I did Mumbetah with the Rucksack Club in about October 1953. We took a taxi from Blackheath to the Kanangra road... We began the walk at the very head of the creek. I do not remember the waterfalls and gorge as very difficult and not up to the standard of, say, Davies Canyon. We camped just before Harrys (Jenolan) River. Next day we walked to the Cox and up Black Jerries Ridge to the Mealong Valley. We reached Katoomba via Devils Hole at a fairly civilised hour.

I used to belong to the Kamerukas and was president in 1956... The KBC began as the Teacher's College walking club and gradually changed to a more general membership. I still tramp regularly both in New Zealand and overseas and keep in touch with some old Kamerukans. Thanks for the memory.

David Henson  
(by email)

### We are not alone

I read the first column and a bit of Quentin's 'Risky business' (*Wild* no 80) to my wife. I thought it might help her to understand why I have to do what I do in the bush. Her comment? 'You could have written that yourself.' So much for helping her to understand, she's way ahead of me! As for writing it myself—well, it describes me to a 't' but Quentin has a way with words that's hard to match. As Chris says in his Editorial (in issue 80) 'his extraordinary prose'. It's not just the prose though, is it? His subject matter is spot on... I'm not alone either, am I? I'll bet the majority of *Wild* readers can say the same thing. Great stuff!

Simon Knight  
(by email)

Readers' letters are welcome (with sender's full name and address for verification). A selection will be published in this column. Letters of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Write to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.

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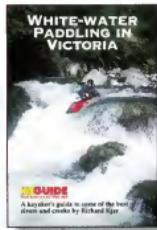
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## Kayak rescue 101

Peter Bland and Jay Watson have taken the kayak cum sled concept to another level (see the report on Gary Kuehn, Eric Philips and Wade Fairley's crossing of the South-Patagonian ice-cap in *Wild* no 80). When Bland was injured during a recent attempt to cross the Antarctic Peninsula unsupported, Watson managed to drag and float him to safety by making one of the kayaks triple as a stretcher.

Bland was swept off an ice-cliff by an avalanche after 21 days of travel by boat and foot. The two men had gone almost 600 kilometres and were camped just eight kilometres short of a successful, unsupported crossing. There have been three attempts to cross the Peninsula without help since 1901.

An article in the Melbourne *Age* on 15 February 2001 reports that Bland had a fractured skull, broken ribs and a dislocated hip.

The rescue began in earnest when three crew members from the support yacht *Tootukoo* reached Watson and Bland. A helicopter was sent by the Chilean Government to carry Bland to hospital.

Watson went on to complete the crossing.

Bland is the first Australian to have reached both the North and South Magnetic Poles. He reached the North Pole in February 1998, just 12 months after major heart surgery to repair an aortic aneurysm (see *Info* in *Wild* no 74).

## S c r u b d o u b t

Most Australians have heard the story: Ben Maloney was geographically embarrassed, if not outright lost, near Precipitous Bluff, Tasmania, for 37 days during March and April.

Maloney was carrying enough food for roughly ten days, blankets and the fly of a tent. He has been criticised for failing to take a compass or a map of the area. Search & Rescue might have had an easier task if Maloney had told someone where he was going and when he expected to be back.

*Wild* asked some outdoors people for comments:

Ben Maloney was lucky that Tasmania is experiencing one of the mildest autumns on record, because if a storm had come across while he was out there, he would not have survived. The equipment that he took was adequate, but barely.

'Search & Rescue is being criticised for "giving up" the search after only three days. Volunteers can only be out there for a certain period and the police have to start making decisions about the likelihood of survival of the person they're looking for. They knew that he had blankets but not that he had a

fly. Without a tent, you're a lot less likely to live, so the probability that he was still alive seemed low. The police only have a certain amount of resources and the golden rule of Search & Rescue is that you don't endanger your searchers.'

*John Chapman*

'One could surmise that Ben Maloney must have spent a huge amount of time going up and down the side ridges of the area because it is quite astonishing that he could have taken over 30 days to do the walk. From where he was last seen it is no more than two days to Precipitous Bluff.'

'A great deal has been made of the impenetrable scrub in the Tasmanian wilderness. Although there are mighty thick areas it is not uniformly so. The best option is to spend time looking at what lies ahead and trying to establish the best way round. The Southern Ranges have thick scrub but also substantial areas that are sufficiently open for slow progress to be possible.'

'The conventional wisdom is to stay put when you find yourself lost, but when it is obvious that many days are to elapse before

anyone is likely to search for you, there seems little point in waiting around. If you attempt to find your own way out the usual advice is to go downstream. [However creeks are often the site of the thickest scrub, whereas the sharpest line of a ridge is likely to have the least growth on it to slow your progress]. My choice would be to get up high on a ridge or try to pick my way through or back.'

*Peter Franklin*

'There is no doubt that Ben Maloney should be commended for his determination in surviving such an ordeal but we cannot overlook the fact that he appeared to be very inexperienced and ill prepared. It is a shame that he was subject to such treatment by the media who lauded him first as a hero and then proceeded to treat him as a victim. The call for him to give the money back to the Tasmanian Government to cover Search & Rescue costs is unwarranted. Police and S&R are salaried and such activities constitute their job and provide them with experience. With this in mind, bushwalkers should still act responsibly and be prepared.'

## Filming the big jump



*Glenn Singleman looks surprisingly unconcerned as his wife, Heather, launches off a bridge in Utah, USA. Singleman collection*

**Husband and wife team Glenn and Heather Singleman are planning a BASE-jump off the Ogre (7285 metres) in Pakistan. They have received funding from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and the Australian Film Finance Corporation to make a film of their climb and subsequent jump.**

**Their support team for the climb includes two well-known Australasian climbers, Mark Baker and Athol Whimp, and climbing sound technician and guide, Adam Darragh.**

**The group departed from Australia on 10 May and plans to return on 30 June 2001.**

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The key issue in determining preparedness for these activities still hinges, as it always did, on what an acceptable level of risk. There is a huge difference in attitude between a conscious decision not to carry an EPIRB [Emergency Position-Indicating Radio Beacon], mobile phone or GPS [Global Positioning System] and the ignorance or "she'll be right" mentality in not carrying a map and compass. However, there should be no legal requirement to carry anything.

There is no doubt that Ben Maloney was lucky and that he's got a lot of guts but there are plenty of other ways to test your luck. I hope it is a salutary lesson to us all.'

Stephen Buntor

## Paddlogaine

Chris Solndal reports that for the first time in Victoria, the Victorian Rogaining Association held a 100 per cent canoe event. The 'Paddlogaine', as it was dubbed, was a five-hour affair and was held on the lower Ovens River near Bundalong. The slow-moving river is a maze of islands and inlets, providing the perfect environment for the competition. There were roughly 150 entrants in canoes, kayaks and K2s.

Following the success of the Paddlogaine, a Trigaine on 17 March required entrants to use mountain bikes, water craft and their feet to negotiate the eight-hour event at Lake Eppalock, Victoria. The Nigel Aylott-Tom Crebbin team came in first place over a field of about 150.

## SCROGGIN

• The Foundation for Humanity's Adulthood (FHA), whose directors include Australia's most celebrated mountaineer, **Tim Macartney-Snape**, announced in April that it has begun **defamation proceedings** against two of Australia's largest media institutions. The FHA wants an apology, among other things, from the **Australian Broadcasting Corpora-**

**tion** and John Fairfax, publisher of **The Sydney Morning Herald**, over a series of media reports in 1995. The FHA, which describes itself as 'a pioneering group that supports a new biological understanding of human nature', has complained to the Australian Broadcasting Authority, which found the ABC in breach of its code on the basis of 'inaccurate' and 'unbalanced' reporting. The ABA has advised it that it would be appropriate for the ABC to apologise to the FHA, yet it has refused to do so.

- Walkers of South Australia's Heyson Trail may wish to make a detour to the **birthplace** of extraordinary Australian aviator **Hubert Wilkins**. The cottage was restored by *Australian Geographic*. It is near Mt Bryan East, 16 kilometres from the town of Hallett, where the key is available from either the Mt Bryan Hotel or the Wildongoleechee Hotel.
- Three Australians died in an **avalanche** in the **Annapurna** region of Nepal on 24 March. The avalanche appears to have been caused by ice-cliffs fracturing off Hinchuli Peak. The three were part of a support trek accompanying an **Australian Army Alpine Association** Everest expedition. The expedition group, which includes **Zac Zaharias** (see his Himalayan article in *Wild* no 80), has continued to Mt Everest.

- **Nathan Taylor** reports that a group of seven **sea-kayakers**, including himself, has made a successful **crossing of Bass Strait**. The group started at Wilsons Promontory on the Australia Day long weekend and reached the shores of Tasmania 12-and-a-half days later, after a

two-day break on Hogan Island due to high winds. The group also dealt with a broken rudder and an encounter with a shark. 



**Luke Edwards and Sam Webb off the coast of Erith Island during their recent sea-kayak crossing of Bass Strait.** Nathan Taylor

## Corrections and amplifications

The Mountain Design telephone number (which appears in the WL Gore insert in *Wild* no 80) is incorrect. The correct telephone number is (07) 3856 2344.

In Equipment, *Wild* no 80, it was stated that Katadyn Australasia had bought Exstream, the US bottle-filter market leader. Exstream has in fact been bought by Katadyn Products Inc of Switzerland. Katadyn Australasia is an agent of Katadyn Products Inc.

Readers' contributions to this department, including colour slides, are welcome. Typed items of less than 200 words are more likely to be published. Send them to the Editor, Wild, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.



**Mountaineer Tim Macartney-Snape is a key member of the Foundation for Humanity's Adulthood. Macartney-Snape collection**

Wild Diary listings provide information about rucksack-sports events and instruction courses run by non-commercial organisations. Send items for publication to the Editor, Wild, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.

### June

2-3	24 hr Rock and Roll R	NT	(08) 9846 1187
2-3	24 hr WA Champs R	WA	(08) 9342 9213
9-11	NSW BCE instructors' re-activation workshop (Barrington Tops) C	NSW	(02) 6558 4316
16-17	2 x 6 hr Schools/Venturer Challenge R	Vic	(03) 9438 6626
17	6 hr R	NSW	(02) 9990 3480
30	6/12 hr R	Qld	(07) 3351 6563

### July

7	6/12 hr R	Qld	(07) 4093 9553
7-8	24 hr SA Champs R	SA	(08) 8271 2712
20-22	Pump 'n' Pedals Carnarvon Eco Adventure Race 2001 M	Qld	(07) 4093 8806

### August

4-5	24 hr Australian Champs R	WA	(08) 9342 9213
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### September

1	Snowaine R	Vic	(03) 9438 6626
1-2	Cygneaine R	Qld	(07) 3351 6563
9	Cygneaine R	ACT	(02) 6274 5334
29	Spring 12 hr R	SA	(08) 8271 2712
29	12 hr Handicap R	Vic	(03) 9438 6626

### October

26-28	Adelaide Ocham Trailwalker 8	SA	(08) 8223 3405
27	6/12 hr Schools Champs R	WA	(08) 9342 9213
27-28	24 hr NSW Champs (S Highlands) R	NSW	(02) 9990 3480
27-28	15/24 hr Qld Champs R	Qld	(07) 3351 6563
27-28	15 hr R	Vic	(03) 9438 6626

Activities: B bushwalking, C canoeing, M multisports, R rogaing, Education Rogaining events are organised by the State rogaing associations Organisations: NSW BCE New South Wales Board of Canoe



TASMANIAN BUSHWALKING

# Whiteout,

**CAMPED UNDER THE ROCKY PINNACLES OF Cradle Mountain, I suddenly awoke to the very loud rumble of not too distant thunder. It took only a few moments to realise that the thunder was shaking the sleeping-mat! It was around 2 am and I was very much awake. I woke John with the words 'I think it's an earth tremor.' I casually enquired about the possibility of an avalanche being set off by all this movement. Although still half asleep, he promptly told me not to worry about it and to go back to sleep. But it was a worrying two hours later before I eventually nodded off again, having resigned myself to the fact that whatever would happen would happen and there was absolutely nothing I could do about it.**

*'Suddenly, without warning, a silent rush of cold pushed me unceremoniously from one side of the tent to the other. In disbelief, I realised I'd been struck by a small avalanche.'*

It was an early awakening to the second day of our ten-day walk along the Overland Track in late August and our makeshift camp high up on the mountain was not where we had intended to stay. The weather had been overcast and, although it had snowed heavily on the days before our arrival, it wasn't snowing when we left the slush-covered car park after a late lunch. Well—not yet, anyway! A momentary break in the clouds afforded a stunning view across Lake Dove to the snow-covered Cradle Mountain but the grey, cloud-filled sky soon closed over and enveloped the summit for the next few days.

After wading uphill for several hours in knee- to thigh-deep snow, we finally reached the Face Track at dusk. It had been very slow going from the Ballroom Forest, past Lake Wilkes to the base of the rocky towers above. Our snowshoes were more of a hind-

rance than a help so they were strapped to our packs during the climb. We continued across the face of Cradle Mountain until, in the fading light, we finally decided that enough was enough. We could not possibly reach Kitchen Hut that night. It was getting cold and we needed to find somewhere to camp. In the dim light, we headed towards what looked like a small flattening on the side of the hill several metres below the track. By the time we reached it, it was well and truly dark. Perched high under the icy rock summits, we began to establish our camp.

registered 4.2 on the Richter scale and its epicentre had been near Mole Creek. As the crow flies, it was only about 30 kilometres away.

Early in the morning the snow was sparkling in the sunshine, the sky was the palest blue and spindrift was blowing in my face—a grand day in the making. Lake Dove was visible below and rocky towers loomed above with only a little mist drifting around. After breakfast we packed up our goods and chattels. John was outside breaking a trail back to the main track and I was sitting on



*Pelion Gap has the best grandstand view along the track. Ahead is the Du Cane Range. John Chapman. Left, Enjoying a rare spell of sun; Pinestone Valley provides easy walking and good views of Cathedral Mountain. Monica Chapman*

The wind whipped up and the temperature dropped. As our South Australian friend, Rosco, had never snow-camped before, there were hurried lessons on how to make a firm platform on which to erect the tents. We put up one tent and then the other, sheltering in the first with a drink and a bite to eat before tackling the second. Once ensconced in our tents, we turned our attention to the matter of dinner and the process of melting snow to accumulate sufficient water for cooking and drinking. That done, we curled up for a good night's sleep. Little did we know then that in a few hours the earth would shake, rattle and roll! The next day we heard on the radio that the tremor had

the edge of the tent with my legs in the snow pit putting on my gaiters. The tent fly was closed to stop the snow from being blown into the inner. I couldn't see what Rosco was doing in the other tent—or anything else that was going on outside, for that matter.

Then suddenly, without warning, a silent rush of cold pushed me unceremoniously from one side of the tent to the other. In disbelief, I realised I'd been struck by a small avalanche. I sat quietly waiting for a further slide to launch me down the slope, wondering what I'd do if it happened, but there was nothing. I vaguely recall registering the snap of a tent pole. I looked behind me to see the tent curved in some very peculiar

# Wipeout and Wonderful

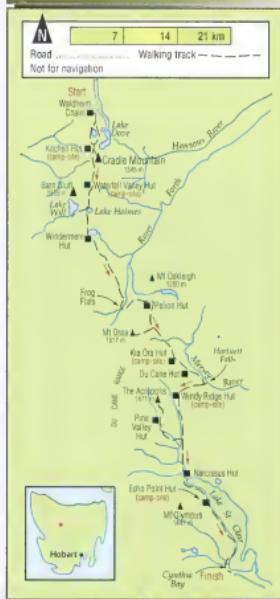
*Monica Chapman takes on Tasmania's famous Overland Track in winter*

shapes. It was then that I felt an urgent need to get out of the tent—perhaps an onslaught of temporary claustrophobia. I needed to escape from my crumpled abode. I tried in vain to unzip the tent-fly, first from the bottom, then from the top. I managed to get a small opening that allowed the crisp air in and I looked across to where the other tent should have been. It was flattened with chunks of snow strewn where it had once stood. With some concern for the whereabouts of Rosco, I called out. Fortunately a voice answered from a position at right angles to my small, triangular view. I pulled at the tent-fly so that I could see in the direction of the voice. I then saw our very tall friend chest-deep in snow, literally swimming to keep upright. He was okay. I called out to find out where John had ended up. He was above the avalanche and had triggered it off while breaking the trail up the slope to the main track.

After digging me, the tents, packs and snowshoes out of the snow, we continued south. The weather closed in and as we traversed the remaining slopes we took care to cross the avalanche chutes one at a time. We snowshoed across several sections of very loose, fresh snow, sometimes waist deep, to reach Kitchen Hut for a late lunch. We decided to stay at the hut for the night to make the necessary repairs to the tent poles and to wait for the weather to improve before heading on.

By early evening we were sitting in white-out conditions. All the next day it was floor-

## The Overland Track



to-ceiling whiteness. I ventured out a short distance to take a photo of the hut, but had to move closer actually to see it! The following day there was more of the same. It was not sensible to move on or return along the same route. During the night it rained and we were thankful as it meant that the soft snow would consolidate and we wouldn't sink in so far during our snowshoe shuffling. The following morning we took advantage of the improved visibility and headed on.

Our next stop was Waterfall Valley Hut—amazingly, we had it all to ourselves. It took some time for Rosco to get used to walking on his larger feet and following precisely in the footsteps ahead. Each time he missed the track, he ended up in a deep hole and had to be hauled out. I must say, however, that he was a quick learner—perhaps because of necessity.

## *Monica Chapman*

loves journeying to wild destinations and revels in the experiences afforded by the outdoors. Whether walking rugged coastlines or ski-touring over alpine plains, she enjoys the solitude, the companionship of fellow adventurers and the remoteness from normal city life.

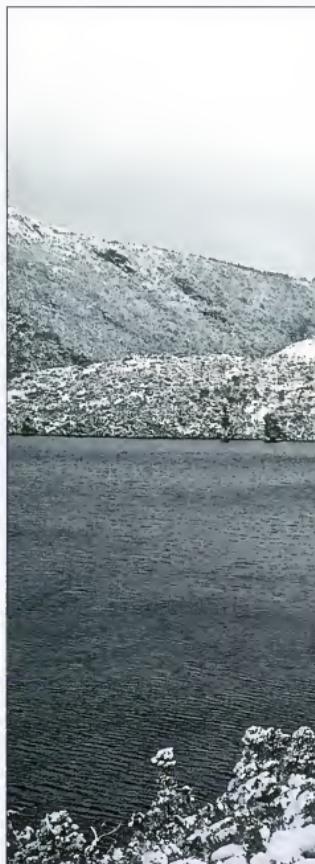


We continued on snowshoes across the flatter plains passing Lake Holmes until we reached the final descent to Lake Windermere. From Windermere Hut onwards those snowshoes were taking an easy ride on the back of our packs. During the trip we encountered other walkers only at Pelion Hut. Here, two local fishermen were very surprised to see our group and another walker heading from south to north. They obviously thought they'd have the place to themselves, but welcomed the company with a hot brew. The solo walker commented on the deep snow he'd encountered over Pelion Gap; however, when we crossed it the next day we marvelled at the limited amount of snow about and thought of the difficulties that lay ahead for the solo walker further north. I think he would have had a bit of a surprise and found the going a fair bit harder than he'd done so far, particularly as he was without snowshoes.

Rosco, who'd taken us to the drier, warmer Gammon Ranges, was now marvelling at the wonders of the rugged Tasmanian snow-capped mountains. It had taken him some time to acquire a pair of snowshoes in South

Australia. However, his efforts had proved worth while. Although we carried them for most of the trip, they proved very useful on the flatter sections of the track in the higher altitude at the northern end of the Park.

There were grandstand views when we reached Pelion Gap, where we stopped for lunch. Mt Ossa, the Du Cane Range, Cathedral Mountain and Mt Oakleigh were all



in clear view. I stood looking in amazement at the majestic landscape that had been hidden in low cloud on a previous visit at Easter. On that trip drizzle had turned to rain that, in turn, had given way to torrential downpours. By day three the tracks had turned to creeks. Mountains had not been visible from Pelion Gap, or anywhere else along the track for that matter, just a bleak view of Pelion East through the hail. Standing here now it was as though someone had lifted the heavy blanket of cloud to reveal the underlying beauty.

After a longish lunch admiring the views we walked down to Kia Ora Hut, which we had all to ourselves. The hut brought back other memories of that wet Easter trip when 30 walkers were stranded here for two days as Kia Ora Creek had flooded.

Further on we passed the historical Du Cane Hut. It appeared to have had some maintenance since my last trip. We visited

Small snowdrifts were easily crossed in Du Cane Gap on the way to Windy Ridge Hut. The following day we had an easy walk to Narcissus Hut and Lake St Clair. We continued along the forested shore line around to Echo Point. Here is a small hut and a jetty at which you can signal the boat. Staying in the hut is not recommended unless you enjoy the company of small,

formation office with take-away food, souvenirs and a restaurant in the adjacent building.

The Overland Track is one of Tasmania's most interesting and undoubtedly most popular walks. The track itself runs almost through the middle of the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park. During the 74 kilometre walk, the spectacular mountains, abundant lakes and tarns, numerous water-



*Trudging through the snow beside Lake Dove, the Little Horn and Cradle Mountain beckon. Monica Chapman*

all the waterfalls in the Mersey valley. They were in very fine form indeed and very similar to our flooded Easter visit. Hartnett Falls were like a heavy, white curtain with mist filling the river valley, soaking cameras and making photography difficult. Attempts at conversation at Ferguson and D'Alton Falls were a waste of breath. Our voices were completely drowned out by the deafening roar of the powerful rush of water into the gorge.

furry rodents during the early hours of the morning. Looking across the lake from Echo Point, Mt Ida rose like an obelisk above the slowly swirling mist lying comfortably on a bed of water. Low cloud engulfed the higher peaks, adding to the mysterious view.

The next day we completed the final section through the damp, moss-covered forest and happily set down our packs on the verandah of the visitor centre. This relatively new complex comprises a large National Parks in-

falls and varying flora and fauna stimulate your senses.

About 8000 walkers head along the Overland Track each year, mostly during the summer months and in autumn when the fagus puts on its golden show. However, for experienced walkers who want to undertake something a bit different during a quieter period of the year, a well-planned trip along the track in winter can be as beautiful as it is challenging. 

# Cradle Mountain the Hard Way

A 'feminine bushwalk', by Robyn Cooper



**THIS IS THE STORY OF MY FIRST BUSHWALK.** Four of us were on this six-day walk from Cradle Mountain to Lake St Clair in Tasmania (it should have been five days but we lost the track on the first day, so the walk took an extra day) over the Boxing Day–New Years Day period of 1962–63. The party comprised two women and two men, all in our early twenties. Only one of the four, Winton, the walk leader, had bushwalking experience; the rest of us were novices, mere tyros. The other man, John, was English, accustomed to walking on paths, crossing rippling rills, gazing at the beauties of a tamed nature. For him, climbing over stiles was the most strenuous activity in his country rambles, and energy was quickly restored at a nearby pub. For the two women, our most strenuous walking experience was to and from the bus-stop or railway station and from department store to department store in central Sydney. Four bushwalkers; four sets of memories—which have faded over the 38 years since the walk. The story I tell is about my memories of the preparations for and the experience of the walk although I also draw upon the recollections of my fellow walkers.

Two considerations shaped my preparations for the walk. In the first place I was determined to be a feminine bushwalker. I was desperately into the feminine, not in the sense of wanting to be a wife and mother—this was not on my life agenda—but in pursuing a life of intellectual thought and action without losing my femininity. As an undergraduate and a postgraduate I had a desire for fear of looking like the plain, poorly dressed female students (as I saw them) who had academic ambitions similar to my own. I was determined not to be a blue-stocking. I made a point of wearing smart clothes, high heels and bows in my hair. This mode of self-presentation had little to do with attracting men (whom I found rather frightening and forbidding). It arose from my resistance to the belief that women's exercise of their minds was detrimental to their femininity (which I now know had its origins in the 18th century) or that only plain or ugly women became academics. I wanted to be clever and feminine. My obsession with femininity shaped my preparations for the Cradle Mountain–Lake St Clair walk.

First and foremost in my preparations was a suitable wardrobe for the walk. The

determining factor here was the desire not to look like a 'butch' bushwalker in boots and sensible trousers but to maintain my femininity. So I went to my dressmaker, who made me a denim suit—skirt and jacket. The use of denim was an acknowledgment of the fact that I was indeed on a bushwalk; the skirt announced that I was a feminine bushwalker. I might add that my denim suit anticipated the denim fashion of the 1970s by ten years. I did buy jeans but they were white and very smart. As for footwear, I ignored our leader's recommendation to buy walking boots from the Sydney camping and bushwalking specialist Paddy Pallin. How could my long and elegantly narrow (AA fitting) feet be enclosed in such gross and heavy footwear? So I went to David Jones and bought myself a pair of Sandler Varsity brogues. For the walk I was prepared to make the compromise of wearing flatties, not heels. The other female walker, Vanessa, was less obsessed with her femininity. She bought two pairs of grey jeans, and a pair of army boots from Paddy Pallin.

I was also anxious to protect my complexion from the harsh weather conditions

to which it might be exposed. So it was back to DJs, to the Cyclax counter in the cosmetic department where I bought moisturising, cleansing and night creams, all in glass jars.

The second consideration was the food for the walk. This was to be my responsibility, presumably because it was considered an appropriately female task. Winton told me where (Paddy Pallir) and what (powdered eggs and milk, nuts, dried fruit, and so on). But I wasn't having a bar of this. How could one possibly survive for five days on such boring food? So I collected the leftover ham and Christmas cake from my mother. And I went back once more to DJs, this time to the food hall. There I bought honey, salami, exotic foreign cheese, fruit and sauerkraut—the last to ensure that we didn't suffer from scurvy on our journey.

Having put together a casually elegant wardrobe, ensured that my skin would be well protected, and assembled a variety of tasty comestibles, I felt that I was ready for the walk. I seem to have blotted out from my mind the fact that this mountain of matter had to be carried in my pack.

The first night was spent at the base of Cradle Mountain. The tent was too small for four people and their possessions, so the packs were left outside. A possum broke into them and helped itself to some of the provisions, including the jar of honey, which was not a bad thing since it reduced the burden that had to be carried on the walk. The next day, day

Tasmanian travel brochures wax lyrical on the beauties of the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park, now a World Heritage Area—the spectacular views, the lakes and the waterfalls, the variety of plant and animal life; truly a bushwalker's paradise. Such was not our experience. The mist and rain made it impossible to see anything—neither the grand vistas, nor the little, furry animals (who were protecting themselves from the weather), nor yet the luxuriant plant life (looking limp and sodden). The weather was consistently wet and wintry; it even snowed on New Year's Eve. The tent, designed to withstand showers but not a deluge, let water in; the huts were the very

in their comfortable boots and sensible clothes. My denim skirt was never worn and the white jeans became stiff with mud. I don't remember whether I used the Cyclax face creams. Perhaps I didn't bother on a journey where my sole purpose was survival.

On the plus side of this dismal story was the roaring trade we did in ham, Christmas cake and sauerkraut with other walkers, sick to death of their dried food. The exchange rate for food was very much in our favour, and we ended the walk with a surplus of dried food. By the time we were into food exchange I was happy to eat dried eggs and veg since it meant a reduction in the general burden.

I have no memories of the walkers we met on our journey. I was too absorbed in my own suffering. Apparently we came across a Japanese bushwalker carrying an umbrella, a camera and potatoes. We were overtaken by Germans (I imagine that we were overtaken by many walkers), strapping figures striding ahead carrying little luggage but with heaps of energy. With the aid of the second bottle of whisky (I had finished the first), we also made friends in the hut where we spent New Year's Eve.

At the end of my six days of hell I decided that I would



*The 'after' photo. From left, John Wiltshire, Vanessa Deans, the author and Winton Higgins. Robyn Cooper collection*

## **'First and foremost in my preparations was a suitable wardrobe for the walk.'**

one, 'dawned bright and clear'. It was the only one to do so until the last day. The walk began with a vertical 300 metre (1000 feet) climb. I began the climb with a pack so heavy that I was bent over almost to the ground. Halfway I sat down and declared that I wasn't going any further. Winton, the model of noble masculinity, offered to relieve me of most of my burden and into his already laden pack went the ham, the Christmas cake, the Cyclax bottles and other weighty items. John also did his manly bit by carrying some of Vanessa's load. I managed to climb to the top and we continued the walk.

incarnation of the primitive (I gather that they're rather more advanced today). We hopped from button-grass tuft to button-grass tuft, sank into mud, walked on logs across creeks (not always successfully) and had our blood sucked by leeches.

My difficulties and discomforts were exacerbated by my Sandler Varsity brogues. It did not take me long to realise that they were totally unsuitable for walking through slush and mud and for clambering over rocks. Worn for the first time, they soon began to hurt. By the second day the pain was insufferable. I felt like the little mermaid in the Hans Christian Andersen story, whose every step on land sent daggers up her body. Every morning I was sent out of the hut early carrying a bottle of whisky. The whisky warmed me and dulled the pain and I managed to hobble to the next hut, where I would collapse and rest until the following day's torture. All I thought about was the end of the walk and whether my feet had been damaged for life.

Ideas of feminine bushwalking were soon abandoned. I envied the women walkers



**Robyn Cooper**

*is an Honorary Associate in the Department of Art History, University of Sydney. She doesn't let pain stop her from any major bushwalking experiences. However, properly prepared and sufficiently attired, she has enjoyed a number of walks in the Sydney area, the Blue Mountains and the Snowy Mountains.*

hurl my Sandler Varsity brogues and my mud-encrusted, no-longer-white jeans into Lake St Clair. I didn't. I didn't have any other shoes with me, and the jeans were my only trousers. I don't remember what happened to them on my return to Sydney. The searing experience of my Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair walk led me to question my ideas of femininity, at least to the extent that I realised bushwalking and femininity were an ill-matched pair. I realised that I had to abandon my feminine principles, at any rate in regard to bushwalking, if I were to enjoy the pleasures it offers. ☺

# There Are Many Peaks,

Tough trekking in remotest Pakistan, by *Andrew Gregory*.

All photos by the author



**THE STREETS OF RAWALPINDI ARE STEAMING** in the approach to the monsoon season. The heat and smell sap my energy. I have taken three planes in two days to reach this old city and I am jet lagged.

In the hotel I meet the seven other trekkers for the first time and we set off to find a meal. Pakistan is an Islamic country and men wear the shalwar kamiz, a loose-fitting pair of pants and a tunic; as we pass through the garbage-covered streets we are glaringly conspicuous in our Western clothes. In Pakistan men dominate and the absence of women in public places is normal but I find it unnerving.

Around a few dishes of dahl and chapatis we discuss our situation. We intend to trek the length of the Biafo and Hispar Glaciers. At 124 kilometres this is the longest continuous mountain-generated ice corridor in the world. At the convergence of the

glaciers is the stunning expanse of the Snow Lake basin, the world's biggest suspended snow hole, some 90 kilometres wide and over one kilometre deep in the central section. To get from the Biafo to the Hispar we have to cross the Hispar Pass, which rises to 5150 metres. Above the pass is a peak called Mt Kurdrophin, which we plan to climb.

As a photographer I'm excited by the prospect of going to a place that is beautiful, remote and seldom visited. Only two or three expeditions a year make this trek. My immediate concern is that our team leader, who has previously attempted to climb Mt Kurdrophin, hasn't been able to make the trip. None of us has been to Pakistan or climbed at high altitudes before. We spend the rest of the day sorting equipment and meeting with members of the trekking company who are organising our porters.

The next morning our flight to Gilgit is cancelled and we leave in a minibus. We spend two days driving the spectacular 600 kilometre Karakoram Highway. The road cuts into massive slopes, which plummet into roaring rivers. A soldier with an AK47 demands my film after I photograph a bridge. This is a war zone and the military presence is noticeable. Soldiers maintain the road, which needs to be constantly rebuilt after rockfalls.

The drive ends at Skardu and the famous K2 Hotel, which is a meeting point for trekkers and climbers. The hotel gardens look out over the vast Indus Delta. Skardu is surrounded by snow-capped peaks which are sheer and impressive and hide the giants of the Karakoram. Some of our team have become sick, possibly due to a suspect meal served in a hotel in Chilas the night before. They don't leave the hotel for two days.

# My Friend



*Dwarfed by the magnitude. Camped on the Hispar Glacier.*

This is a setback but it gives the rest of the group time to explore the town and to stock up on equipment and supplies. We employ a high-altitude porter who has just climbed Nanga Parbat to accompany us on our climb.

Skardu seems like the end of the line but the road actually ends at the small village of Askole, which is the starting point for the trek up the Biafo Glacier. The 'road' is a dirt track and we hire Jeeps for the trip. We have to change Jeeps and carry our equipment across the remains of a bridge that has been washed away. More Jeeps trapped on the other side take us the rest of the way.

Askole is in a beautiful valley. We pitch our tents and watch the porters gather. It is also the starting point for expeditions to K2 and a German group returns and tells us tales

of the mountain. At Askole I have my first experience of Islamic custom when I approach the village with my camera. The old women and boys scream and guide me away. Looking at women is forbidden in northern Pakistan—there won't be any Nepalese-style portraits of smiling villagers on this trip.

The next day we watch in amazement as 65 dissentient porters discuss weights and loads. We plan to be away for almost four weeks and we have to carry everything, including fuel for our stoves. Even after the porters are assigned their loads, some members of our team still carry about 15 kilograms of equipment.

The first day is a pleasant walk along the tracks of the valley. It is hot and we spend the late afternoon exploring a canyon. Blocks

of ice wash up on the sandy shores of the flooding Braldu River. We spend our first evening at Tongol, a large field once used as a polo ground. At night I listen to the two goats tethered outside my tent and try not to think about their fate.

The next morning I watch the sun kiss the peaks far above us. We have breakfast and watch the porters heckling. Suddenly the discussions cease and they charge off. We follow, unsure of what the day will bring. We pass the Baltoro Glacier, which leads to Concordia and on to K2; we head in the opposite direction and climb our first steep section to reach the Biafo (which means 'Rooster' in Balti) Glacier.

The landscape on the Biafo is chaotic. Massive boulders are stacked in precarious

piles at the base of the glacier. We walk for ten hours, jumping rocks, crossing streams and negotiate the moraine to camp at Mango. We cross steep scree that tumbles into crevasses. The end of the day leads to the collapse of a few of our team members who are still recovering from their illness.

The next day we march on to Biantuo. The glacier is like a highway of ice interrupted by holes and crevasses around which we zigzag and back-track. Biantuo is a valley behind the moraine, with a beautiful mountain stream. We decide to have a rest-day; we have climbed considerably in three days and can feel the altitude. The next day we entertain a large crowd of porters by climbing boulders near the camp. The goats are killed and our cook, Firdos, presents us with a curry of offal.

In the morning our team leader, Dave (we have three Daves on this trip), is unwell. He hasn't completely recovered from his illness. He decides to return to Skardu and he takes two porters to guide him. We later learn that he was suffering from pneumonia. We continue up the glacier and stop at a site called Marporo, which is at the foot of a massive rock wall. The moraine is extensive and it takes a couple of hours to cross the rubble leading to the camp. We soon learn to fill our water-bottles whenever possible as the water here is silty.

We settle into a pattern of walking more than one section each day and the trekking is tiring. Our guide Amin terminates our rest breaks with a cry of 'Chalo' (hurry up). Our pleas of 'How far?' are answered with 'A few hours more—Inshallah' (God willing).

After Marporo the glacier becomes rocky and we leave the sheltered valleys and camp

which conceals the crevasses. We rope up and form lines to climb towards the peaks. There isn't any running water and I quickly dehydrate and develop a headache which thumps through my body with every step.

For a few hours we march past the 7285 metre Ogre. We finally climb to a flat section below the Hispar Pass. Beneath us is the spectacular Snow Lake, surrounded by high and jagged peaks. We quickly prepare a camp and lend our ice-axes to the porters, who furiously dig two large pits in the snow which they cover with tarpaulins.

In the morning we clear the powdery spindrift from around our tents. The snow has continued all night and we spend the day watching spectacular storms appear over the mountains. We climb a nearby ridge and in between blizzards we catch glimpses of the crystalline Snow Lake. Most of us are now suffering from some form of altitude sickness and we also supply headache tablets to a steady stream of porters. During the four days we camp at Snow Lake the porters spend their time in their caves making chapatis on kerosene stoves. A visit to one cave sends my head into a spin; the fumes are unbearable.

For a day and a night the snow is so heavy that we are confined to our tents, which at times are flattened by squalls. Looking out-

## *'I hide my shock when I climb up. The other side drops vertically for hundreds of metres.'*

on rock outcrops. We are now above 4000 metres and another Dave has developed an abscess in his tooth, possibly due to the altitude. He cannot do anything but wait. In the evening I sit and stare at the serrated peaks of the Karakoram. I ask Amin what is the name of a certain peak. Amin simply looks at me and says, 'there are many peaks, my friend'. This becomes a game we play over the next couple of weeks. The Karakoram is the home of countless unnamed spires.

As we approach Snow Lake the glacier becomes a road of ice covered by snow

*The group takes a rest on the Biafo Glacier—one half of the longest continuous mountain-generated ice corridor in the world.*



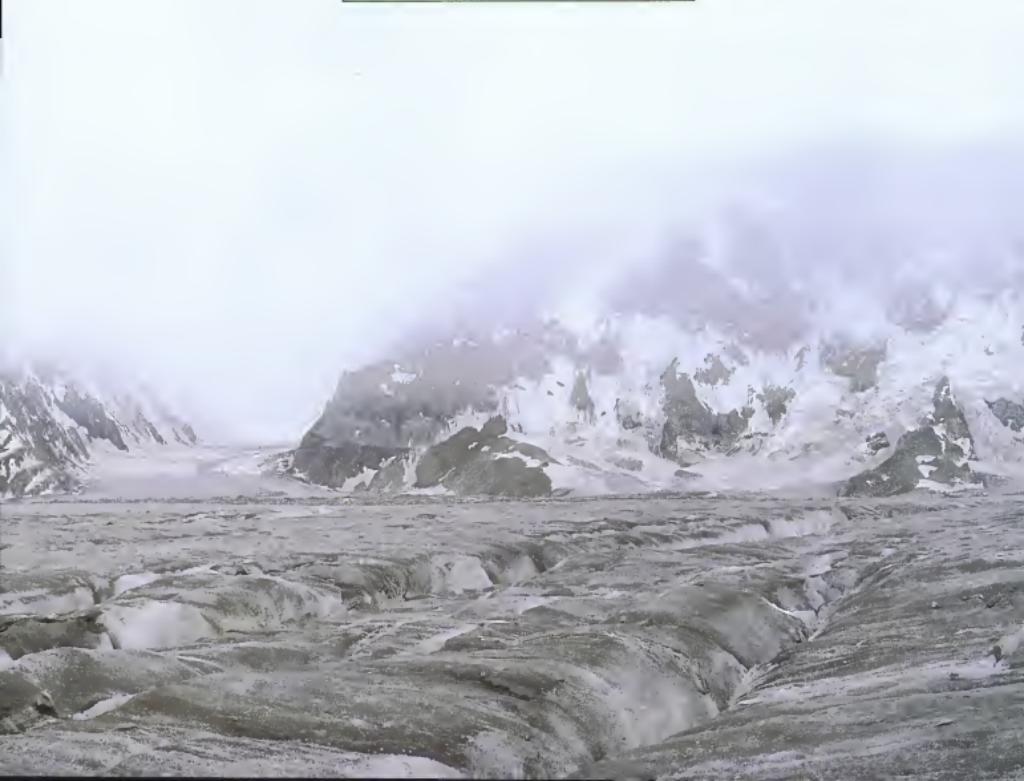
side during the blizzard I can't see the tent next to mine. We decide to cross the pass before it becomes impossible and we have to turn back down the Biafo.

Eventually the snow clears and I try to photograph the dawn's alpenglow as the camp is packed up around me. The porters take off and we rope together and follow, snaking upwards through waist-deep drifts. The top of the pass is a corridor with peaks towering on either side. To our right is Mt Kurdophilin. We plan to camp here but the porters march on, desperate to reach dry ground below the pass. After 12 hours of walking we set up camp in the terrible, rubble strewn moraine below the pass and fall into our tents.

Over breakfast the next morning the discussions are heated. The porters wish to continue down the Hispar. They are paid for each section and want to reach the villages below as quickly as possible. We want to climb; the weather has cleared and from our camp we can see the summit of Kurdophilin. A search of our rations reveals that the porters have exhausted most of our fuel and food at Snow Lake. It becomes apparent that we have been undersupplied for the trip. We are torn between going down to the village and attempting the climb; we let the weather decide.

At dawn the sky is crisp and clear and we hurriedly prepare, taking as much food as the camp can spare. Five of us and our high-

## Biafo and Hispar Glaciers, Pakistan



altitude porter will attempt the climb. We persuade three other porters to help us climb back up the pass. Our packs are loaded with tents and climbing gear. The pass is steep and difficult to cross from this side.

We climb slowly around crevasses into which you could drop an entire house. At times we fall up to our armpits in drifts covering deep crevasses. We set up a camp just above the pass and look down the Hispar towards the setting sun. The glacier becomes a magnificent, golden highway surrounded on all sides by ominous spires. The peace of our small camp and the beauty of the moment leave us speechless.

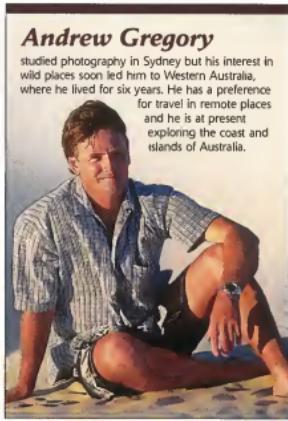
The next day we climb towards the peak. The last section to our final base camp is steep and I am exhausted. We camp directly below Kurdophin which, except for its sheer summit, is thick with snow. Our evening meal is meagre and we are all hungry. We have another glorious evening; we are happy to be away from the rabble of the camp and on the mountain. That night we squeeze into two tents. I have trouble coping with the altitude and I wake frequently, gasping for breath. I have also suffered sun- and wind-burn and my lips are cracked and bleeding.

At midnight we rise and prepare ourselves for the summit dash. The snow is deep and we have to climb when it is frozen solid. The night is clear, moonless and a crisp 20 degrees below zero. The stars reflect off the

bought a manual Nikon and a Noblex Panorama camera. I don't have a tripod so I improvise with ice-axes and shock-cord to photograph the dawn. The Noblex has a revolving barrel lens and it malfunctions in the cold but I manage a couple of shots.

silent, ethereal zone where nothing lives. To my right I can see the entire length of the Hispar Glacier and the walk that lies ahead of us.

As the sun rises the ridge groans with avalanche whispers. The day before we saw ice-



### Andrew Gregory

studied photography in Sydney but his interest in wild places soon led him to Western Australia, where he lived for six years. He has a preference for travel in remote places and he is at present exploring the coast and islands of Australia.



*Slogging up towards the Hispar Pass during a break in the weather.*

ice, providing a subtle illumination. We climb roped together with crampons and ice-axes, chipping our way up the mountain. One of Dave's crampons comes loose and Carlos and I move up to help him. Carlos drops his headtorch and dives to catch it. I dig my axes in and luckily stop his fall. We all watch his torch tumble straight down the mountain; it seems to take forever.

Just before dawn we reach the ridge that leads to the rocky summit. I hide my shock when I climb up. The other side drops vertically for hundreds of metres. We walk along the precarious, narrow ridge surrounded by the magnitude of the Karakoram. I have

We soon realise that the snow and our lack of resources will stop us from reaching the summit. The final ridge is steep and rocky and would require fixed ropes, more than a day's work. Our food is gone and if the weather changes we will be in trouble. We stop and savour the moment; the view as far as we can see is of massive peaks, the Ogre is closest and in the distance is K2. We are standing as high as planes fly, near the

falls and we descend quickly. For breakfast we have green tea and biscuits. We then spend a long day returning to our previous camp in the boulder-strewn moraine. The porters who helped us back up to the pass have remained but the rest of the camp has gone. We finish our supplies: A tin of sardines, one Mars bar and a few dry biscuits between six of us. The porters have run out of flour and we share packet soup.

We walk for another day and a half over rubble and moraine. We eventually reach the camp made by our porters and our other trekkers, Dave and Joe, in a valley called Broom Broom. We arrive to cheers and clapping. The camp is short of supplies and they have sent porters ahead to bring back food. We are too tired to walk the next day. It is a beautiful site and wildflowers bloom.

The Hispar is a turbulent sea of boulders, impassable in places. For the next couple of days we rock hop through the moraine and

Difficult moraine eventually gives way to tracks. We come to our first tree and enjoy the wild flowers. We see Hispar hours before we arrive. The village is perched beneath hills on the other side of the glacier, which has by now turned into a thundering river. We drop down to the river and cross a suspension bridge. During a slow climb up to the village, we draw a crowd of young boys who run ahead laughing. We arrive exhausted and later savour hard-boiled eggs and potatoes.

A stunning ride brings us to the beautiful Hunza valley. We rest in a hotel and watch the full moon rise over the magnificent 7788 metre Rakaposhi. We spend a couple of days sightseeing and shopping for shawls and lapis. It is spring in the Hunza and apricots are drying in the sun on the roofs of the village. That night we are all jubilant and as a group we sit down to a meal of chicken. Some of us are unfortunate and become sick with salmonella poisoning that lasts for days.



*The group strings out on the Biafo Glacier.*

negotiate terminal glaciers. Our camps are by rampaging streams running off awesome walls. At night we listen as huge sections of ice and snow break away from the peaks above us. Eventually we reach a camp where one of the porters has returned from Hispar village with a few kilos of flour. We continue for another day to a large, grassed area called Bitamral.

Late that afternoon the porters challenge us to a cricket match. We use boulders for stumps and we play for an hour, fielding in slow motion a four thousand metres before we collapse on the grass. In the evening our head guide Amin returns from Hispar, with barely enough food for a meal. We still have 30 porters and they begin to fight.

In the evening the men from the village come to party but we are too tired to stay up dancing. The next day we explore the village, occasionally catching a glimpse of girls or women working in the distant fields. We buy a sheep and watch as Ferdos slaughters it for the evening meal. Dinner is eagerly awaited and we watch in dismay as once again Ferdos serves us offal. The porters have already taken the meat. I eat anyway and spend the night being violently sick. The porters ask for baksheesh and are not content until we hand over all the cash we have between us. Thousands of dollars in climbing gear also goes missing.

The next day we leave in Jeeps, and the porters follow in trailers drawn by tractors.

From Hunza we have another day in a bus to Gilgit where we find that our return flight to Islamabad has been cancelled. Two more days in a bus along the Karakoram Highway and we are back in Rawalpindi. We check into a hotel at midnight and eat breakfast cautiously the next morning.

From here we scatter on different flights. Greg and Mark return to Perth. The rest of us leave together for Sydney via Bangkok. The plane is hours late and as we taxi to the runway for a second attempt at take-off I notice our seat-belts are all different; our plane is a collection of spare parts. An Islamic prayer plays over the video and as we climb to 6000 metres I close my eyes and utter a quiet *Inshallah*. ☺

# John Mayston Béchervaise

In the centenary of Federation, *Brian Walters* profiles the man who first climbed the peak named in honour of the new Australian nation



**Above left,** Portrait of John Béchervaise in his Antarctic furs, artist unknown. Lorna Béchervaise collection



**Above right,** Béchervaise as art master at St Georges School, Harpenden, UK. Ken Peake-Jones collection

**IT MUST HAVE BEEN A GREAT TRIP. I CANNOT FIND** any photographs of the hikers visiting Victoria's Lake Tarli Karrn, but there is a strange memento: a photograph of a hard-bread biscuit.

Crosbie Morrison had most of the walkers sign their names on the biscuit. In those days probably only the governor, Lord Somers, and CA Hoadley, a geologist who had accompanied Lawson to the Antarctic, were well known. But the other names have since become legends in a variety of fields. There is Alan Moorehead, later a famous traveller and fine writer; there are names well known in Scouting circles—Samuel Wilkinson and Bill Waters. There is the future Rhodes scholar, Pyke. Morrison, an experienced bushwalker, later became a renowned naturalist, with a series of popular radio broadcasts in the 1930s. And in the middle of the biscuit is the signature of the 17-year-old John Béchervaise—who was to contribute so much to the appreciation of the outdoors in Australia.

It was December 1927. The Boy Scouts took the Governor of Victoria on a trip to see Lake Tarli Karrn and Mt Wellington. In those days the logging

roads did not penetrate beyond Licola. It was a major expedition to get to the hidden lake in the Victorian Alps. Béchervaise had been chosen from amongst all Victoria's Scouts to accompany the governor on this trip.

Later, Béchervaise would take hundreds of teenage boys on trips like this that they would remember all their lives.

He was already an experienced walker. Just 17 months before, shortly after his 16th birthday, Béchervaise (who was born on 11 May 1910) had walked out of the front door of his suburban Melbourne home in Murrumbeena carrying a swag and a staff, determined to walk until he reached snow. After two weeks and 130 kilometres, he arrived in Mt Torbreck, and saw snow for the first time. What did he think of it? After having imagined snow for so long it seemed familiar even then.'

His lust for adventure had been fired by reading the books written by his great-great grandfather—also John Béchervaise—who had been awarded the Arctic Medal in 1826. The elder John Béchervaise (the name derives from the Channel Island of Jersey)

had penetrated the Bering Sea aboard the *Blossom* to await Sir John Franklin—the former Governor of Tasmania—on his doomed attempt to find the North-West Passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

I met the younger John Béchervaise in 1990 when he was already 80 years old and a legend of the Australian outdoors. He struck me as congenial, if slightly formal; a short, inspiring man full of energy. He was very organised and he quickly located the slides and documents we wished to show me. He spoke of the trip to Mt Torbreck more than 60 years earlier:

Mats of snow grew firmer and larger as I climbed. Still it was softer and wetter than I imagined, and I remember my cold feet and sodden boots. I pitched my tent in a thicket of wattles, somewhat intimidated by a couple of steers, and, recalling old tales, made my fire a little larger than necessary.

Next morning my boots were frozen and the snow like stone.

I learned a lot—shelter is more important than food—and passed this on through future years to youthful companions. Not infrequently we took our boots to bed.

Béchervaise never lost his love of ice and snow. He was to spend a significant part of his life in snowy terrain. In 1956, 130 years after his ancestor received the Arctic Medal, he was awarded the Polar Medal.

In the year preceding the Lake Tarl Karrn expedition, Béchervaise made the trip to the lighthouse on Wilsons Promontory, Victoria—a very different undertaking from today's walk. The railhead was at Korumburra, 140 kilometres from the lighthouse, and you had to walk from there. There wasn't a road to Tidal River and the Prom was largely unexplored.

Béchervaise was captivated by the granite tors and made further trips. In his parties he included a young woman he had met at Melbourne Teachers College, who later became his wife—Lorna Fearn-Wannan. They were to have three daughters and a son.

## Geelong College

In 1935, following his marriage to Lorna, Béchervaise began what became a very creative association with Geelong College. He was appointed to the staff as warden of the House of Guilds—here, students were to receive help in any project from writing a sonnet to building a steam engine! The headmaster had told him. From this grew the Exploration Society, which was to undertake some major expeditions in Australia.

## The UK

In the meantime, John's career at Geelong College was interrupted by a trip to the UK, where he studied art at the Courtauld Institute of London University. During his time in the UK he worked with Kenneth Clark and was director of art and headmaster of St George's School in Harpenden.

Béchervaise also took up a sport then unknown in Australia—rockclimbing. He quickly qualified to join the Fell and Rockclimbing

Club and the Climbers' Club of Great Britain. He was able to familiarise himself with the most advanced techniques then offered anywhere in the world. He climbed at most of the major rockclimbing areas in Wales and pioneered a number of new routes, developing skills he would use on his return to Australia—and pass on to many others.

The Second World War extended Béchervaise's stay in the UK. He was a conscientious objector, and reflected later that this position was accepted far more readily in the UK than it would have been in Australia.

In 1945 he returned to the staff at Geelong College, and there followed a series of blockbuster trips which still fire the imagination today.

## Rodondo Island

Just off Wilsons Promontory lies a cliff-girt granite outcrop known as Rodondo Island. During the Second World War there had

been attempts to place an observation station on it, but a landing could not be made. To land a party of schoolboys on this island was a daring idea: this is what Béchervaise set out to do.

The hazards were formidable. There was only one conceivable landing place, and that could not be used if there was anything more than the slightest swell—so departure would have to await perfect weather conditions. Once there, it was a rockclimb up the cliffs. There wasn't any fresh water on the island, so equipment to distil sea water was required.

In 1947 Béchervaise and six others, including three teenage students, jumped from a small boat on to a steeply sloping slab of granite, taking care to pick the right moment in the surge of surf. They rockclimbed up cliffs to the vegetated crown of the island, where a base camp was established. During their nine days there, the group made a detailed survey of the island, later sending a number of specimens



Above, the return of the Kista Dan from Mawson in 1954. From left, Captain Peterson; Richard Casey, Minister for External Affairs; Phillip Law; Béchervaise. Alan Campbell-Dury. Right, the biscuit signed by members of the trip to Lake Tarl Karrn, Victoria: As well as those of Béchervaise himself and Lord Somers, signatures of other well-known outdoors identities are discernible, including those of Bill Waters and Samuel Wilkinson. Brian Walters collection



to the National Herbarium in Melbourne.

## Uluru

In September 1948, hiring ex-army all-terrain vehicles, Béchervaise took his students to Uluru and Katajuta (then known as Ayers

Rock and the Olgas, respectively). Béchervaise made a solo ascent of Mt Olga, a serious climb, thinking he would be the first to do so. On the summit he found a note in a bottle. A policeman had climbed the route in the early 1930s.

The tracks left by the Geelong College party were scooped out a few months later to make the tourist road that is now taken by so many when they visit these icons of the Australian outback.

### Federation Peak

The most memorable triumph of the Geelong College Exploration Society was the first ascent of Federation Peak in Tasmania's South-west in 1949. Federation Peak is a gigantic pillar of quartzite dominating a jumble of lesser peaks, and for years it symbolised the inaccessibility of the South-west.

The Geeves family had explored up the West Cracraft River in 1897 and in 1901 (the year of Federation) Richard Geeves

On 27 January 1949, using the rock-climbing skills he had honed during his years in the UK, Béchervaise led a party of three schoolboys towards the summit of Federation.

With a significant drop, the climb is very exposed. Merely to find the route was a major achievement. At last, the party reached the fabled summit.

'We were just lucky', Béchervaise told me. 'After 70 hours of rain the weather cleared at the critical time, and we were able to climb the peak. I took three students, and we put a rope over one difficult pitch.' Béchervaise was quick to acknowledge the great help of the Hobart Walking Club explorations.

It was front page news around Australia. Aircraft photographed the handkerchief they had placed on the summit as proof of their ascent.

The plateau where the party camped is now named 'Béchervaise Plateau' in honour of his achievement.

Weren't parents worried about the dangers? Far from it. One father was so impressed that he chartered a plane to fly the entire triumphant party back from Hobart. Béchervaise had an enviable safety record.

I didn't think it was risky. I retained my sense of immortality at that time. We never had parents objecting to the risks and we never had an accident. It behoves a leader to say how a thing will be done. But in facing a challenge a link is forged between members of a party which is stronger than any other kind of link I knew in my teaching career.

### Walkabout

Later that year Béchervaise was approached by Charles Holmes of the Australian National Travel Association and asked to become co-editor of the Association's magazine *Walkabout*. Many will remember this magazine, through which Béchervaise introduced Australians to some of the lesser-known parts of their country. Two of his articles from *Walkabout* have been reprinted in *Wild: Tasmania's Overland Track* in issue 63, and *Hinchinbrook Island* in issue 77.

The experience he recalled most fondly from his time at *Walkabout* was the expedition to the Archipelago of the Recherche, south of Western Australia, with a team of experts including botanist Jim Willis and zoologist Vincent Serventy. The party sailed 1600 kilometres through the group, visiting many beautiful and remote islands and making the first extensive biological survey of the area.

### Heard Island

The Director of the Antarctic Division, Phillip Law, approached Béchervaise and invited him to lead the 1953 expedition wintering at Heard Island.

One of the peaks Béchervaise was not able to climb was Big Ben on Heard Island. In a party which included Fred Elliott, who

had accompanied him up Federation Peak, he was defeated by ugly conditions. He remembered it clearly:

The 16 November days on Big Ben, Heard Island, living for five days in a collapsed tent with its ridge pole two feet below the blizzard snow, and the hungry igloo built for survival and its burial also. Of such are enduring memories.

But Fred was able to save him when he fell into a crevasse:



*The school group on Rodondo Island, Victoria, in 1947. Béchervaise is on the left. Fred Elliott*

had actually reached the lake which now bears his name, on the south side of the peak—a remarkable feat.

In the late 1940s a number of walkers from the Hobart Walking Club made expeditions, pushing ever closer to Federation—the Holy Grail of bushwalking at the time. Various parties of which key members were Nancy Shaw, Jessie Luckman, Bill Jackson, Nancy Smith, Ron Smith and Leo Luckman, made a series of intrepid trips and eventually found a way up Moss Ridge. On 23 December 1947 they reached the area now known as Béchervaise Plateau and ascended about 30 metres of the obelisk of Federation itself.

The following summer a strong party from the Hobart Walking Club led by Jack Thwaites made a further attempt to climb the peak. The party encountered bad weather conditions and did not succeed.

Béchervaise took 15 schoolboys to the area in January 1949, just after the Thwaites party had left. For 12 days he led them through trackless scrub and along swollen rivers to the base of the peak.



*In New Zealand with Walkabout magazine; a typical pose according to Fred Elliott! Elliott*

The abrupt engulfment in a deep crevasse before gaining a safe way to the base is indelible. We were roped of course, but I shall not forget the cheerful face of Fred Elliott, well-belayed and ready to help me as I swung in the blue darkness.

### Antarctica

In 1955 and 1959 John Béchervaise was officer in charge of Australian expeditions at Mawson in Antarctica. (He made a number of subsequent trips.)

He reflected:

There was a particular feeling about Antarctica when so few were there. In 1955–56 we were the only base within the Antarctic Circle, and there was a feeling of being part of the vastness.

It was during the 1955 expedition that Béchervaise led the party which first visited the Prince Charles Mountains. He described it to me as the winter sun poured into his study:

After nine days travelling over the endless plains of Antarctica it became as if we were advancing over the curve of the earth. And then—it was like nothing I had ever experienced—a vast range of mountains loomed ahead in the clear air. Although sighted from the air a great distance

melted and ran down cracks in the rocks. It is still to be seen. As awe-inspiring may have been the storm when our two Beaver aircraft were dismembered and their parts scattered to the distant sea, leaving irreparable ruins. Somehow, with a good team, these misfortunes were met.

### Geelong Grammar School

Back in Australia, Béchervaise taught at Geelong Grammar School between expeditions. There he introduced schoolboys to activities such as rockclimbing; one whose heart was fired was Chris Baxter, who accompanied Béchervaise on the first ascent of Tower Hill in the Grampians. (See the article in *Wild* no 60.) He also introduced boys to skiing and took parties (again including Chris Baxter) on trips that involved extended summit camps on Mt Stirling. He told me:

School parties provided me with good and efficient company on holiday expeditions for 40 years.

On a long march, a delicate climb, a wet camp or a flooded stream I could count on them. All our journeying, our scrambling, our tramping, as well as offering physical challenge and adventure, were directed towards developing an understanding of the environment.

The cooperation of students and teachers all sharing both ease and hardship and a scientific interest in nature forged links which remained secure. I



Béchervaise on the summit of Federation Peak in 1949 after making the first ascent of this Tasmanian icon. Elliott

away the previous year, no human being had ever been there before. It was as if we had created these mountains out of our own minds.

The prominent peak which he first saw is now called Mt Béchervaise (2362 metres—he had tried to name it Mt Law). It is not the only feature in Antarctica named after him: Béchervaise Island is the largest of a group near Mawson, and Lake Lorna in the Mawson Range honours his wife.

The 1959 Mawson expedition experienced considerable dangers. The power station burnt down and later an outlying base was also burnt. Béchervaise reflected:

Most vivid and terrible in the Antarctic is fire. I have experienced that when the metals



Béchervaise, left, and Fred Barton (Ranger) at Spermwhale Head, Gippsland Lakes, Victoria, in 1963. Chris Baxter

believe that for many the meeting of such youthful challenges is of lifelong benefit in one form or another.

### Writing

Between all his other pursuits, Béchervaise remained an active writer, photographer and artist. In this capacity he published no fewer than 28 books, one of which, *Australia:*

*World of Difference*, won the Col Weickhart Award for Australian literature in 1968.

### Other trips

In his mid-50s, when most men are beginning to run out of puff, he climbed a number of peaks in Central and South America including a solo ascent of Popocatépetl (5452 metres), which he described as 'my favourite mountain'.

Béchervaise also found time to accompany Warren Bonnython (see his profile in *Wild* no 79) on many sections of his historic traverse of the Macdonnell and Flinders Ranges.

After his retirement he led treks in China and the Himalayas during the 1970s and he visited the Antarctic for the last time in 1980 when he was 70 years old.



It was during his busy retirement that I came to know him. He and his wife Lorna entertained us for lunches in their Geelong home. He showed me slides of the Antarctic, and Mt Ellery in East Gippsland when it was a three-week walk (now it is half an hour from the road). I still have the letters he wrote to me in his graceful draftsman's hand. One letter tells me of his stroke, and still the writing is pretty good.

Finally he became less active and after a long illness he died on 13 July 1998.

For those he took on challenging trips, for those he inspired through his books and magazine articles, for those who have simply heard of his adventures, he has left a legacy of love for wild places.

### Brian Walters

A co-founder of *Wild*, Brian Walters is passionate about the Australian outdoors, where he has been walking and skiing for decades—most recently with his family. A Melbourne barrister, he is involved in a range of environmental and social-justice issues.



Explorers are of an age gone by, and today the nearest we get are adventurers. But John Béchervaise went to places where none had been before. He overlapped the ages of exploration and adventure. When I came to know him, visits to remote places were no longer possible for him. I asked him what motivated him in his life of exploration and adventure. 'Curiosity', he replied, and then paused to reflect.

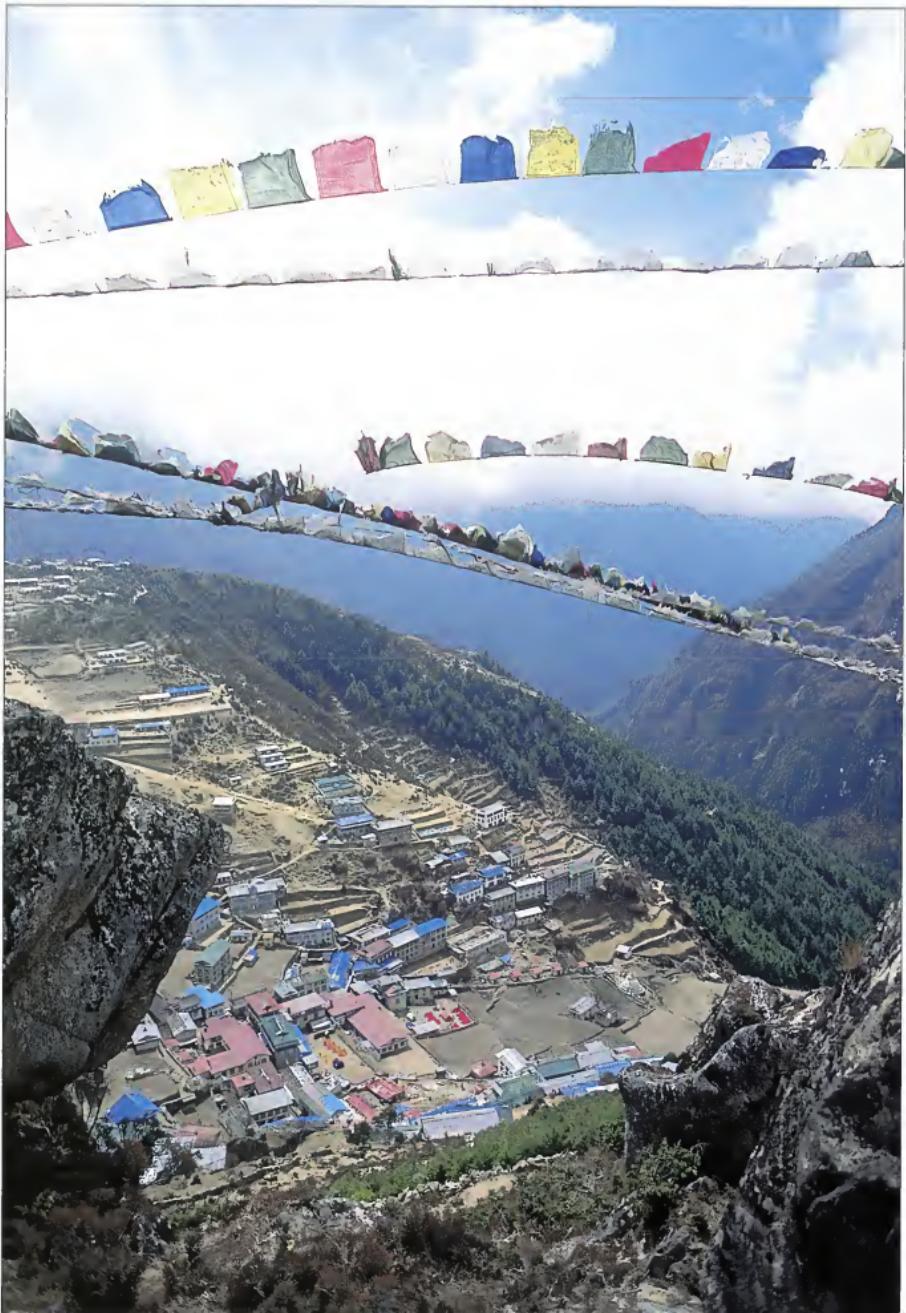
If you want adventure—I mean real adventure—you can find it exploring your own backyard.



# Nepal in the freeze-frame

From Gokyo Valley to Namche Bazaar,  
by Matt Darby

*Most people climb Gokyo Ri to marvel at views of Mt Everest but the best views might be right outside the door of their tent!*





*Matt Darby has photographed rockclimbers in Thailand and heliskiers in New Zealand. His other passion is surfing. When not travelling Matt lives in Melbourne with his wife Caroline and dogs Priya and Coco. His next trip is to Tibet for the Litang Horse Festival.*



**Above**, with views to rival any the Himalayas have to offer, try greeting the dawn from here on your next trek. A 'loo with a view'—early morning at Mon La, with views across to Phortse and Taboche. **Top**, trekkers are greeted with Buddhist carvings, views of Mt Everest (8850 metres) and the mighty South Face of Lhotse (8511 metres) on the way to Mt Everest Base Camp. **Left**, Looking down on the Sherpa capital of Namche Bazaar. At 3446 metres Namche is the gateway to the Khumbu region.

# Across

Pleasure and pain in one of the most rugged wilderness areas

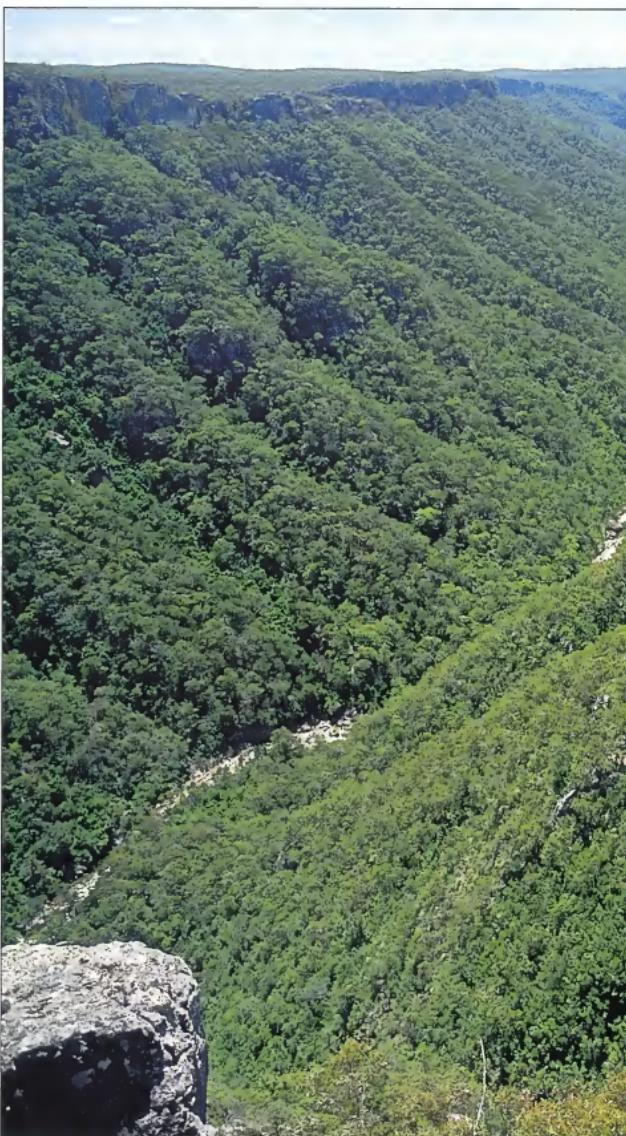
**IT WAS A WALK IN TWO HALVES.** DURING the first few days, we enjoyed the paradise of a delightful pristine watercourse in eastern Australia, swimming in countless crystal-clear pools. The horror of the second half transformed this pleasant amble into a desperate undertaking; the battle against the vegetation added to heat exhaustion, dehydration and fatigue, which took their toll on our resolve and composure.

'It looked so simple on the map' is the bushwalkers' infamous excuse. I was not the type to head off into the blue yonder extemporaneously. I strung together the route from several vague descriptions called 'Fitzroy Falls and Beyond', written by a group of dedicated bushwalking-conservationists who have compiled an extraordinary amount of information on the Morton National Park. Their pioneering heyday was in the 1950s and 1960s when the land between the Shoalhaven River and the sea was a blank on most maps. They could use many of the mining, logging and bridle tracks that snaked over the plateaux and through the rugged gorges, and much of the nomenclature is derived from their heroic exploits.

The start of the walk was little more than a muddy ditch on the side of the road and the faintest of scrubby gullies followed. Over the next few hours, the gully matured and the light scrub thinned. At times an active imagination could even detect the hint of a pad, albeit fleetingly. To our relief, Bullfrog Creek turned out to be a superb staircase down to the Etrema Gorge. I am tempted to describe the descent as 'easy' because only one loose, steep section required a bit of a heels-and-bum scramble.

Etrema Creek is covered with a thick layer of rubble that continues downstream for many kilometres, occasionally choked by the detritus from colossal landslides and rock avalanches. As we jumped from boulder to boulder, we wondered where on earth would we find a surface suitable for a campsite. There was nothing but stone everywhere, and at times the walls of the gorge descended all the way to the creek-bed.

Although the many house-sized boulders markedly slowed our progress, their one advantage was that they dammed the creek's flow, creating pools of astonishing beauty. Unlike many of Australia's great watercourses, Etrema Creek isn't stained by tannin but runs crystal clear for its entire length. Moss-covered boulders on the creek-bed give it a slightly green tinge when viewed from above, but the water is so



*A study in wilderness: The Etrema Gorge from Possibility Point.*

# Ettrema

In New South Wales, by Sven Klinge. All photos by the author



clear that even depths of several metres are almost transparent. This is somewhat disconcerting when diving in!

Two hours downstream from the Bullfrog Creek junction lies a wonderful camping area on the west bank, right next to four beautiful pools. This place is an anomaly as there are no other camp-sites upstream or down for several kilometres.

The three of us set up our three separate tents, a luxury against which our backs protested every time we donned our packs. In addition, each of us had our own private pool for bathing—do reef resorts get any better?

The trickle of cascading water is always conducive to a somnolent night and after indulging in a ten-hour sleep, we rose, bathed again and set off down the river. Eventually the terrain forced us into the water, so off went the boots and on came the sandals. In contrast to the previous day, this one was a scorcher, the start of a heatwave that would last a week. We were unconcerned at the time as we merely had to 'fall' into one of the many pools to make the stifling heat instantly disappear. How we would long for this in a few days' time.

The gorge twisted and turned tightly as we approached Sentry Box Canyon, some pools were so deep that we had to carry our packs on our heads as there was no way round. Luckily the creek was not in flood—otherwise we could easily have been trapped here. The canyon wasn't characterised by the strictly vertical cliffs that appear in its more orthodox counterparts in the Blue Mountains, but the dramatically steep, rocky slopes made for engaging walking and glorious pools.

We emerged at the other side of the canyon and dropped our packs at the confluence with Myall Creek, wandering up this side creek to the cold, deep pool that forms an almost insurmountable obstacle for parties using it as an avenue of descent. The waterfall was only a trickle here, and I looked up and wondered how I ever got down a few years ago. I must be getting older.

Black snakes love this middle section of Ettrema and we saw plenty, comparable with the notorious infestation on sections of the Kowmung River. Apart from the snakes, there were few signs of wildlife or even bird life. To compensate, the gorge opened up with spectacular views to soaring sandstone formations several hundred metres above us. We camped at a rough site right by Jones Creek underneath the impressive Thompsons Cliff. The spectacular quartzite wall bathed us in the reflected light of the setting sun although the remainder of the gorge was creeping into dusk.

Next morning we explored upstream a little before continuing further down Ettrema Creek. As the gorge grew wider, the pools became less frequent and therefore more necessary in the sweltering temperatures. We also saw our first gympie, a menace about which we had been warned. This is a tall tree with large, plate-sized, pale leaves covered with fine hairs that are actually poisonous barbs. Emma couldn't resist testing it and

sure enough—zap! Ouch! At least we knew the enemy. As it turned out this was the least of our problems in the days to come.

Even though each day's distance was only about 11 kilometres, it was always a race against the setting sun, and we ended up averaging only a kilometre an hour over the rocks. Of course, the many wonderful pools were a regular distraction.

The third night's destination was a campsite near Tullyangela Creek but when we finally found it, it was completely over-

glassy pools surrounded by coachwood and other rainforest communities. Surprisingly, the GPS worked, so we were pretty sure of our location. An old rock cairn on a large boulder just upstream from a huge boulder block-up also helped to relieve our anxiety. We filled up with a total of nine litres of water and then began the gruelling ascent to the cliffs; Frank led the way.

My pack had never felt as oppressive as that on climb. Large embedded rocks that I assumed would take my weight overturned



*Wading across Ettrema Creek near Sentry Box Canyon.*

grown. A decade seemed to have passed since anyone stayed here. Furthermore, it is a considerable and awkward distance from water. We ended up staying in an open forest above another gorgeous pool opposite Cinch Creek.

We left early the next morning as our objective was to leave the Ettrema Gorge behind and drop into the next valley to the east. The Ettrema Plateau and a couple of cliff passes separate the two watercourses. Never had we felt more isolated; civilisation was two days distant in any direction.

Our first task was to head up Cinch Creek to reach a spur that would take us up to Pauls Pass. It is a cool creek with many

when I stepped on them and rolled down with a crash. The ground was loose and it was a case of three steps up and one back. Furthermore, there was scrub to negotiate and the gympie trees to dodge. Meanwhile the sun was getting higher and hotter.

Half the day had gone as we reached the base of the cliffs, resting again while we tried to determine which was the way to Pauls Pass. Eventually we headed west along the base and found it, marked by a large cairn. The pass was named after Paul Howard, a powerful bushwalker with an introverted mien, who discovered it during an epic walk with Paddy Pallin and others during Easter 1952. Amazingly, it was first identified by

stereoscopic aerial images taken by the army.

We had to haul our packs up by rope as they were too thick to fit between the very narrow crevice through which we were forced to squeeze in order to ascend the pass. Another obstacle was a narrow ledge that necessitated using an old iron spike that had been hammered into the cliff. The views of the Cinch Creek gorge, especially across to Perryman Falls, were awesome. We signed our names in a small logbook,

curious to read how often parties came through. The average seemed to be one every six months, and the book went back more than a decade.

On top, out of the shade of the cliffs, the heat hit us. Hard. Our morale sank as we surveyed the thick scrub. There wasn't a track! We bashed north to some open rock platforms and had lunch, deliberating what to do given that we were about three to four hours behind schedule. I was in favour of a quick reconnaissance out to Possibility Point before heading east. After all, there had to be some reward for our morning's efforts. Leaving Frank to rest in 'conservation mode', Emma and I dodged the scrub out to the promontory. It was difficult to enjoy the view as it was now the hottest part of a virtually cloudless February day. Therefore I'll leave it to Frank Peters, a pioneering Syd-

ney University bushwalker who crossed the gorge in 1951, using ropes. This was the very first recorded attempt by Europeans. He wrote in his diary about his impressions from Possibility Point:

By now our water was depleting fast. We returned to our companion, Frank, and headed through the tea-tree scrub to the east, counting on an old road that ran to the south of Sturgis Hill which would, we hoped, make progress easier.

But the road was just a memory. Despite another GPS fix to confirm our position, it was little more than a couple of ruts in the heath. Many sections were almost completely overgrown with thick-stemmed bushes towering above us.

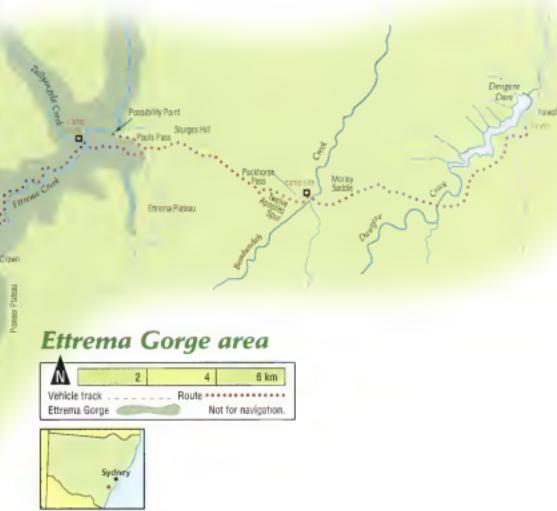
As we left this so-called 'road', we had only one litre of water left. Frank discovered a serious leak in his bottle at the same time as I found that the lining of one of the water bladders had ripped. The situation had deteriorated from serious to critical. We were aiming for Packhorse Pass, another route through the cliffs that would take us

*'I finished my film with a self-timer group photo—a pathetic trio pervaaded with ennui, looking like losers in an all-out knife fight.'*

ney University bushwalker who crossed the gorge in 1951, using ropes. This was the very first recorded attempt by Europeans. He wrote in his diary about his impressions from Possibility Point:

The view from the cliff top is awe-inspiring. The valley is about 1500 feet deep, and stretching along either side is the longest stretch of unbroken cliffline that I have ever seen. The whole spectacle was one of grandeur, but frightening...

to Twelve Apostles Spur and then down to Bundundah Creek. The scrub was thick with acacias and young eucalyptus saplings which not only made progress difficult but navigation, too, as we couldn't fix on to any landmarks. The vegetation stifled any wind at our level, leaving a suffocating heat. We were caught in an irreconcilable conundrum: Shorts and T-shirts to allow us to remain cool, or long-sleeved clothes to avoid the scrub? We chose the former.



Navigation was very troublesome as we approached the Bundundah valley; the terrain seemed to be forcing us to descend into narrow gullies into Selection Creek. It was nearly 5 pm when we reached the dissected cliff-edge and finally found Packhorse Pass to the south. The lone cairn that marked the pass should have been a sign that we had done something right but the going was about to get tougher. The pass was choked with a sea of vines and ferns

down for our longs. The all-important water of the creek was all we could think about as our containers had long been empty.

We almost fell into Bundundah Creek at dusk, limbs throbbing with the accumulated poison of the nettles. Even though we were still confronted with another full day's walking through thick scrub to get home, at least for the time being we were safe. We lapped up the dark water as we swam through it and made camp a little way downstream near

pathetic trio pattered with ennui, looking like losers in an all-out knife fight.

The track ended abruptly and we were enveloped in more lawyer vines. Progress once again slowed to a few hundred metres an hour. In the midst of our imbroglio, we hugged the base of the cliffs and made our way around to the top of Fletcher Spur overlooking the Danjera valley. A few rock-cairns confirmed our GPS fix and we charged down to Belmore Flat. This time, only burrawangs lined the spur crest and fortunately the thickets were sparse enough to avoid.

At the bottom, the creek was stagnant and brown—the majestic, clear pools of Etrema were a world away. Once again, little remained of the former private property. It seemed as though the wilderness in this area had an insatiable hunger for colonial legacy. There could have been a city here once and no one would know.

It was now the hottest part of the day and our final climb was still to come. Should we wait for the day to cool down or proceed? The enticement of a shower, of solid food, of cold drinks was too much, so we elected to start. Our packs did not feel lighter as we headed up the very steep spur towards the Yalwal Plateau, following an old pad that wound its way across a multitude of gullies



*It doesn't get much better than this.*

and was guarded by several lone rock towers, the 'Twelve Apostles' after which the spur is named.

Descending spurs can be deceptive at the best of times; it's all too easy to head off down the wrong one and end up in a side creek thick with impenetrable rainforest. The ferns and vines on Twelve Apostles Spur were soon accompanied by spiky burrawangs that cut easily through the skin if you brushed up against them the wrong way. Each step was a battle and sections got so thick we had haul our packs through them. Almost inevitably, the wrong-spur problem arose and we were faced with the prospect of spending a horrible night on a steep slope with enormous appetites and without water.

We tried another spur that seemed to be heading in the right direction, which lifted our spirits momentarily. Then the unthinkable happened. Stinging nettles. These weren't the ankle-high pest bushwalkers occasionally encounter near rivers, but a ferocious jungle of them, head high and tangled between all the branches and leaves of the other vegetation. Not only was it a race against time in the failing light, but now each step was a source of searing pain, without respite. We had neither the energy nor the willpower nor the space to set our packs and dig

the site of an old clearing, now overgrown with bracken. This was once a 60-acre private property selection where Jenny Atkins, the landowner, lived with her two daughters during the days when Yalwal was a bustling town.

That night was uncomfortable as the legacy of the stinging nettles subsided into a dull tingling that lasted until the morning. The blood from scratches upon scratches stained our sleeping bags and we wondered whether all this was really worth it. We joked about how much money would induce us to go back up that spur. Bill Gates would have to file for bankruptcy.

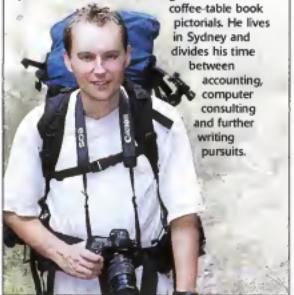
The final day was also a scorcher and we had to face another climb with significantly reduced water carrying capacity. We forced ourselves to drink from Strike Creek until we felt sick and left at 7 am to avoid the hottest part of the day. Atkins Spur was a pleasant aberrant; only lightly covered in scrub. As we approached Morley Saddle, we even picked up the remains of an old bridge-track that connected the Danjera and Bundundah Creek valleys.

The saddle was...a saddle. Nothing more. No views. Nothing. At this point we didn't care, we just wanted to get home. I finished my film with a self-timer group photo—a

## Sven Klinge

is the author of a number of outdoors publications that cover subjects ranging from walking and mountain biking to camping. His photographs have appeared in numerous publications, from advertising brochures to coffee-table book pictorials. He lives in Sydney and divides his time between

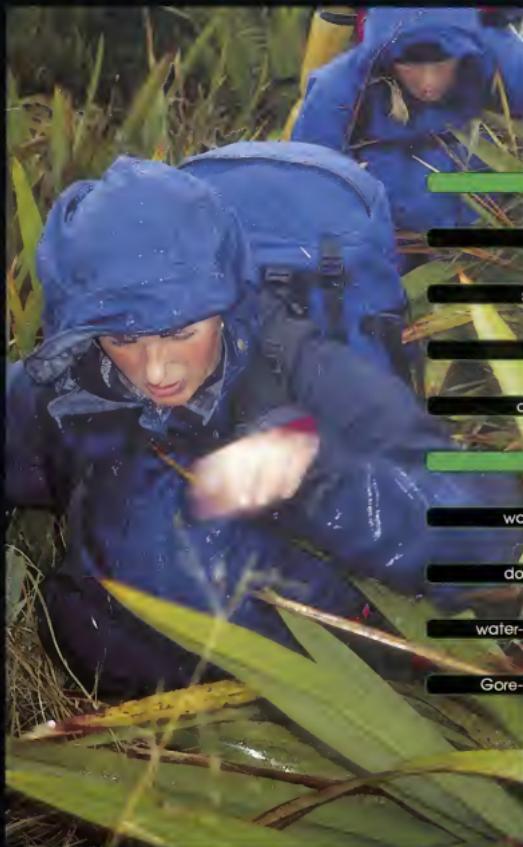
accounting, computer consulting and further writing pursuits.



in between Belmore Flat and Danjera Dam. On one extremely steep section, we had to rest for ten minutes after every five, so oppressive was the summer sun. Pushing on would have induced retching and the onset of heat stroke. For the third time, we were faced with running out of water.

Eventually the walking pad levelled, became a track and then—finally—a road. We staggered past old mine shafts and the slag-heaps ruins of the gold-rush days. The car was a cheering sight at the deserted picnic area of Yalwal but our spirits took some time to recover. We had made it—bushwalkers turned raconteurs. Were we now better humans because of our ordeal, aggrandised by this baptism of pain? No. Would we take heed of this lesson? We'll see... ☺

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SKI-TOURING FEATURE

# Ski-touring in the Victorian



# Alps



## Ski Tracks on the Crosscut Saw

A winter adventure in the Victorian Alps, by *Tony and James Brown*

WITH EIGHT DAYS' FOOD, SAFETY GEAR AND an ample portion of rum, we two brothers, country GPs with seven children to our names and each a year either side of 40, took off. The first ten minutes of our ski trip were by far the most dangerous. Having cadged a lift from a passing four-wheel drive, we clung with all our might to the back of an exposed tray as we sped over logs and wash-outs and dodged overhead limbs. Finally we were deposited at the serene Cobbler Lake.

We may have Telemarked in Switzerland, the USA, Scotland, New Zealand and much of the available snow in Australia but we had not succeeded in a winter traverse of the Crosscut Saw in 25 years of back-country skiing. Previous attempts had been thwarted by ice and blizzards. On this trip we chose to approach the Crosscut Saw from Mt Cobbler, the Cobbler Plateau and Mt Speculation.

The snow cover was excellent and eight days of perfect weather followed our departure. The route took us up Mt Cobbler, whose snow-covered massif rises behind the lake of the same name. The first night was a camp at the point where the King River road reaches the Cobbler Plateau. The next day we spent skiing up Mt Koonika and across to Mt Speculation. That evening found us working the slopes of Mt Speculation. The camp was obscured by cloud and the wind made staying warm a challenge.

The next day was beautiful and the snow was soft. We began the traverse

*The snow-laden Crosscut Saw from Mt Howitt, in the heart of the Victorian Alps. Michael Hampton*



*'The hut toilet has a view so good that even some bush critter had taken a seat and left a dropping on the lid.'*

James Brown at Vallejo Gantner Hut, five-star accommodation with a toilet to match. Anthony Brown

across some of Australia's most 'alpine terrain. The ridge of the Crosscut is very narrow with a steep drop on both sides. The route taken is often just in from the edge of a cornice and there are many vistas of cliffs and changing light on snow. The Victorian Alps topped by snow stretch as far as the eye can see. The Razor and the Viking were serene in the late afternoon sun. The experience brought a sense of blessedness; a sadness tinged

the satisfaction of completing the route that had evaded us for so long.

The Vallejo Gantner Hut at Macallister Springs was snowed in and had been unoccupied for months. The rats could smell a feed and were soon skittering across the snow in the hope of warmth and bread. The hut toilet has a large window with a view so good that even some bush critter had taken a seat and left a dropping on the lid.

There is a rocky outcrop on the nearby Devils Staircase, which looks across to the Crosscut Saw and the Terrible Hollow. We visited this place each morning to witness the dawn. As the first pink light of day strikes the Crosscut, the vapour trails of three early morning flights from Sydney to Melbourne advance over distant Mt Hotham like a trident. The image of plane loads of Sydney 'suits' heading south brought to



**Anthony Brown**  
Anthony pauses for a breather on Mt Koonya in front of the Bluff. James Brown  
Anthony Brown is a rural general practitioner. He is a father of four and has spent all his spare time during the last 30 years in the outdoors wonderland that is Australia; kayaking, skiing, walking, climbing and diving.



**James Brown**  
James on the Crosscut Saw. Mts Cobbler (at the back), Koonya, Speculation and Buggery are behind him. Anthony Brown  
James Brown also lives in rural Victoria with his family. He, too, is a GP. His favourite memories include walking the Spires in Tasmania, skiing the Main Range and kayaking the Shoalhaven River.

mind Viking longboats heading for new conquests.

The whole trip was undisturbed by other humans or their traces in the snow. Our splendid isolation enhanced the beauty and exhilaration of the experience. The snow gum and the wedge-tailed eagle were our companions: Australia's snow country stands alone in these conditions.

We spent one day visiting Mt Magdal, which has great cross-country down-hill slopes that match our ability. There is something very fulfilling about carving a linked Telemark line down a clean slope. This expression of human rhythm set on the canvas of a singular and proud mountain snow bowl is pleasing to the soul. We were joined by a wedge-tailed eagle that sometimes floated close to the snow and sometimes soared on the rising air currents, changing direction by only a graceful turn of its wedged tail.

On our return trip over the Crosscut the sun had softened the eastern slopes enough to enable me to ski down. Anthony said that I fell down the slope rather than skied—brotherly relationships always have an element of competition!

The snow was running out when we reached the Cobbler Plateau, so we reluctantly trudged the last few kilometres to the beautiful Cobbler Lake and back to our lonely car.

# Skiing the Victorian Alps

**Scott Edwards tells you where to go**

**Mt COBBLER TO THE CROSSCUT SAW** is certainly not a trip for the faint-hearted but there are numerous more relaxing back-country ski excursions in the Victorian Alps. The key is to enjoy yourself but still be prepared to push your own boundaries—and then perhaps a bit further. It's about skiing often and skiing with your peers.

Ever wondered why some skiers are puffing, spluttering and panting their way up the trail while others glide effortlessly past? It's not all due to fitness; technique plays an enormous part. The first thing is to learn how to travel efficiently across snow and the quickest way is to get some lessons. You can try to get some pointers from friends, but bizarre terms like 'squash the bug' and 'point your headlights down the hill' are often more of a hindrance than a help. Get an expert who knows how to teach; it's worth every cent.

**Lake Mountain** is about one-and-a-half hours from Melbourne and has approximately 30 kilometres of undulating groomed trails through picturesque snow gums. There is a ski school here so grab an instructor to give you a grounding in the basics. You'll learn techniques such as diagonal striding, skating and simple turns. These skills are invaluable when touring the back country; a more efficient style means less energy expended. Lake Mountain also has some excellent viewing points and a few small hills where you can practise your snowploughs, stem Christies and, eventually, Telemark turns. You can hire touring skis either in Marysville or on the mountain. Don't be put off by the skating freaks clad in embarrassingly tight psychedelic Lycra. Standard wet-weather bushwalking gear might seem daggy but it's suitable and sensible attire.

While touring the groomed trails can be fun, the back-country experience reaps the greatest rewards. Make sure that you are competent at map reading and using a compass—off-track skiing can be a dangerous pursuit. Always be prepared and carry energy food, water and protective gear.

**Mt Stirling** is about three hours from Melbourne and offers everything from groomed trails to off-trail touring. For the more adventurous, Stanley's Bowl has some excellent, steep skiing. Ski it at least once so that you can join the endless arguments about whether it's blue or black in grades of difficulty. The ski school at Telephone Box Junction (TB) can supply a range of touring and Telemark skis as well as boots. For a great day-trip, take the Stirling Trail up to the summit, play around on the slopes, then whiz back down on the TBJ café by the Bluff Spur trail. Stirling is an excellent place to make your first forays into snow-camping and ski-touring with a full ruck-

sack. Groomed trails lead to the summit area but it's best to camp near the Bluff or GGS Huts as they offer shelter in blizzard conditions and, most importantly, toilet facilities. Tending to nature's needs in the snow is a difficult and messy business (discussed later). Stirling is a relatively safe place but care should be taken around the summit as it can ice up quickly in bad weather.

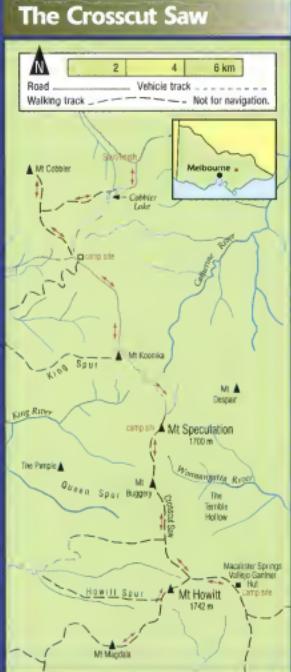
Once you have your navigational skills well honed and your ski technique a little more polished, the options for trips become more diverse. **Mt Loch** (near Mt Hotham) has a variety of terrain to suit any level of ability. The downside of Mt Loch is its proximity to Mt Hotham. The upside is that it also offers some security if the weather turns nasty. Derricks Hut is a good base and plenty of easy tours can be made along the spurs running off the slopes of Mt Loch. There are some good, easy slopes near Derricks Hut but if you want to test yourself, scope out the runs off Machinery, Middle and Swindlers Spurs. Spargos Hut is also an option for camping and there are touring- and tree-runs nearby. The key to enjoying Mt Loch and its surrounds is to be prepared to explore the place.

**'Don't be put off by the skating freaks clad in embarrassingly tight psychedelic Lycra.'**

**Mt Baw Baw** in Gippsland has some excellent tours. A lot of them are below the tree line, which provides protection in bad weather. Care should be taken on the open plains due to exposure and potential visibility problems. I still bear the emotional scars of a failed trip to an obscure hut somewhere out in the plains. I'll carry to my grave the memory of a night spent with three other large, sweaty people in a cramped, raggedy old tent in the middle of a blizzard.

Close to Baw Baw is **Mt St Gwinear**, a favourite of beginners and intermediate tourers. Sheltered camp-sites abound and longer tours are possible. **Mt Erica** is worth a visit just for the granite boulders which litter that section of the Australian Alps Walking Track.

**Falls Creek** is a Mecca for Nordic racers but it's also the gateway to some great day- and extended tours into the Bogong High Plains. **Mt Nelse** is an excellent trip and a great base for reaching peaks and knolls in the area—such as Spion Kopje. There are also plenty of huts in the area with nearby camp-sites and snow-pole lines



to aid navigation. Care should be taken as some of the trails cross exposed areas subject to very strong winds. If bad weather does hit, there is a relatively fast escape route back to the safety of Falls Creek resort.

Are the turns happening? Happy to lug a ridiculously heavy pack up an impossibly steep mountain? If so, you're ready for some of the incredible terrain the Victorian Alps has to offer.

**Mt Bogong**, the highest peak in Victoria, abounds with steep gullies, chutes and open bowls. While offering some touring possibilities it's the steeps that draw the crowds. Cain Gully is always a favourite amongst intermediate skiers and has some long runs leading to a refreshing creek at the bottom. For those looking for a challenge, Tombstone Gully area and Eskdale or Audax Points have quality steeps and plenty of rock obstacles to carve around. The runs of West Peak are extremely steep and should only be attempted by very experienced skiers. There is protected camping in the grassy areas around Michell and Cleve Cole Huts but in good weather, camping just off the summit peaks is a heavenly experience.

**Mt Feathertop** is often described as the jewel in the crown of Victorian ski-touring and certainly deserves that title. Some of the steepest skiing in Victoria can be found here and it's beginning to attract a variety of snowboarders, alpine and Telemark skiers. For intermediate skiers there are good slopes around Federation Hut, which is also a popular base for camping. North-west Spur features the MUMC Hut, an incongruous dome that stands out a little less since it was painted green. It's a great base for experi-

jacket, shell pants, synthetic fleece insulation layers and thermal underwear are the basis. Gaiters are also handy for keeping snow out of boots.

**Boots.** Footwear is one of the most hotly debated areas of XC skiing and it is complicated further by the diversity of skiing styles. Plenty of old-school skiers talk incessantly about the sensitivity only a cow-hide leather boot can give. Some swear by calf-high petrochemical monstrosities in go-fast

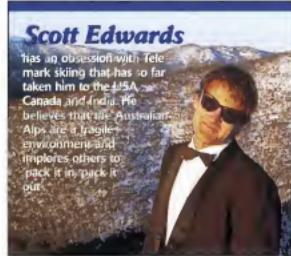
**Skis.** Another area of contention. For touring in the back country with a pack on your back, nothing beats a pair of full-metal-edged skis. Light, skinny skis are great on relatively flat ground but when the terrain steepens and the snow gets deeper, something fatter is more stable. For a good compromise between turning and touring, look for a ski somewhere around 80 millimetres wide at the tip, 60 millimetres at the waist and 70 millimetres at the tail. This will give you plenty of 'float' in deep snow and good



## Victorian Alps



*Heading to the Bogong High Plains from Falls Creek. Glenn Tempest*



### Scott Edwards

'has an obsession with Telemark skiing that has so far taken him to the USA, Canada and India. He believes mainland Australian Alps are a fragile environment and implores others to "pack it in, pack it out".'

enced skiers only, as the return from the summit to the hut can be treacherous in icy conditions. It is wise to avoid the hut during the weekend of the first full moon in August unless you enjoy the company of inebriated university students. Also of note is the route to Mt Feathertop by the Razorback from near Mt Hotham. This ridge has incredible views and its own selection of steep fun slopes; definitely worth a tour for turns. It may be an easy tour but never attempt it in fickle weather as shelter is very hard to find.

### Gear

**Clothing.** In the alpine environment you can experience extreme wet and cold weather but good-quality bushwalking gear is really all you need. A waterproof shell

colours. Their resemblance to downhill-skiing boots is almost uncanny except that they flex at the toe, but only with brute force. If bushwalking on skis is what you're into, a light pair of leather touring boots will certainly suffice. As your desire for turning performance increases, stiff leather boots, often with buckles, are required to transmit the power into the ski to make it turn. A lot of people bypass leather and get straight into plastic boots that are not only stiff but keep your feet dry. These range from light, forward-flex touring models to the performance-oriented, very stiff (and heavy) telemark boots. It's best to start out with lighter boots, whether they are plastic or leather, and upgrade if steep downhill performance is required.

turning ability. A fatter ski will offer greater performance in turns but may require a stiff, heavy boot to drive it. A pattern-base ski is often the best choice for beginners. A grip is cut into the base allowing the ski to claw its way up a hill. Pattern skis make a strange, whizzing sound as they track their way down the slope, not particularly melodic but intriguing none the less. For turning performance and speed, a smooth waxing base ski is the stick of choice although, sadly for some, they make little noise at all. You'll need to stick fiddly, furry skins on them to get up hills, so start with pattern skis for simplicity.

### Toilet time

If you are touring or camping near huts, use the toilets provided. The impact on the environment is significantly reduced and who wants to dig a pit in deep snow? If you do have to dig one, you should go right through and into the ground below. Toilet waste has to be completely buried or it contaminates the creeks and rivers after the spring thaw. You may not like the idea, but the tenet of 'pack it in, pack it out' includes human waste! Some back-country skiers use a poop chute made from plumbing pipe with screw-on caps. Others simply take lots of plastic bags for mass wrapping and to avoid spillage. Dispose of it properly on your return and preserve the alpine environment. ☺

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# Mt Jagungal

*Trevor Lewis puts in the legwork to visit this remote alpine "bushwalkers' mountain"*



A lone figure climbs Mt Jagungal. Henry Gold

**WHILE MT KOSCIUSZKO IS NOTEWORTHY** only for its height, Mt Jagungal claims a central place in the hearts and minds of bushwalkers who frequent the Kosciuszko National Park, corresponding to the pivotal position it occupies in the topographical scheme of things. Its sprawling hog's back is a salient landmark from just about every other hill and mountaintop in the park north of the Main Range; while no less than three big rivers—the Tooma, Tumut and Geehi—begin their journeys on Jagungal's flanks.

The vast spread of rolling high country that surrounds Jagungal has plenty of scope for longer walks. The three-to-four day walk described here runs the gamut of landscapes typifying the northern Snowy Mountains

where treeless, frost-hollow valleys, plains and wetlands alternate regularly with snow-gum-wooded ridges and hilltops. Much of this walk is on tracks, or what the New South Wales National Parks Service likes to call 'management trails'. While these four-wheel-drive tracks run through a gazetted wilderness area, they seldom carry vehicle traffic, and are often hemmed in by bush, grassed over or well-carpeted with forest litter. There are opportunities for off-track walking—but the abundant subalpine scrub makes the tracks the pleasantest way into the country.

In these track notes I've used the huts as convenient staging points, but I don't suggest that you rely on them for shelter. This walk intersects many perennial streams and passes

numerous potential camp-sites. If you want to avoid the crowds, particularly on long weekends, you'll be happiest making your own itinerary, and camping where you like.

## When to go

This is a three-season walk. In late spring (mid-October to the end of November) you can seek out the first flowers and make the most of the lengthening days while the insect population remains largely dormant. Come mid-summer, the flowers will be at their best, and you'll benefit from temperatures significantly lower than in the sweltering lowlands. But you'll battle hordes of March flies and abundant mosquitoes. Autumn brings relief from

the insects. Heavy frosts become common in April and May, often melting into mellow days. If you venture out at this time of year, your sleeping bag should be capable of coping with subzero temperatures.

Miserable weather, in one form or another, can occur at any time of the year. For the duration of the ski season, management routinely closes the road between Khancoban and Cabramurra; however, parties can arrange, through the park's office in Khancoban, to be transported to the snowline. Winter ski tours fall outside the scope of this article.

## Safety

Some cold-weather clothing, and a full set of rainwear, should be in your kit at any time of the year. In summer you should also take care to protect yourself from sunburn.

I have always felt free to drink from any river and creek in the wilderness areas of the park. But if you want to be safe, avoid drinking from any stream with a hut in its catchment. That'll still leave you plenty to choose from.

## Maps

While the *Khancoban 1:50 000 Central Mapping Authority sheet* provides the best available coverage, navigation is straightforward, and the *Kosciusko 1:100 000 Natmap sheet* will suffice. Stuart Brookes has produced a walkers' and ski tourers' map of the Round Mountain/Dargals area.

## Further reading

Two major guides to walking in the park were last published more than a decade ago, and copies could be hard to find. They are *Snowy Mountains Walks*, compiled and published by the Geehi Bushwalking Club; and Charles Warner's *Bushwalking in the Kosciusko National Park*.

## the walk AT A GLANCE

Grade	Medium
Length	Three to four days
Type	An alpine peak among sub-alpine valleys and high plains
Region	The Snowy Mountains
Best time	Mid-October to late May
Special points	Subtle changes in vegetation and landform, sense of space and remoteness

## Access

The walk starts at Snakey Plain Track head and finishes at Round Mountain Track head; the start and finish lie some 13 kilometres apart on the Kiandra-Khancoban road. This major sealed road links with the Snowy

Mountains Highway to the east, and with the Murray Valley Highway to the west. You could make the walk almost a full circuit by continuing from the Round Mountain area on the Theiss Village Track, and reaching the road at Out Station Creek or Tooma Reservoir; this will leave you with a manageable three to five kilometres of road-bash to retrieve your vehicle.

You can car-camp the night before setting out at the Clover Flat rest area two kilometres west from the Snakey Plain Track head; the Bradleys Hut rest area is similarly convenient to the Round Mountain Track head.

## The walk

### Snakey Plain Track head to Wheelers Hut

The track head is inconspicuous and modestly signposted. A locked barrier and walkers' registration book greet you. The track undulates before starting a steady climb which



Take a seat on the verandah of Wheelers Hut for a great view of Mt Jagungal.  
Stephen Curtin

leads through a belt of alpine ash. Higher slopes have views of Tooma Reservoir before levelling off into dense snow-gum forest.

A sudden descent brings you into the narrow, winding natural clearing of Snakey Plain. A set of solar panels and other unexpected infrastructure dotting the plain serve a project which is monitoring the corroboree frog population.

Snakey Plain is only a couple of hours' walk from the road, but you might want to camp here if you intend to visit Dargal Mountain; this short side-trip requires several hours of rough walking.

Don't waste time searching for the vehicle track shown on the Natmap sheet, which heads through the saddle between Dargal Mountain and Big Dargal Mountain—it seems to have vanished without a trace. You'll find

a clear lead or two going upstream beside Snakey Plain Creek; once out of the valley and on to the slopes, you'll come across a good deal of scrub. Finally, you'll feel that you're getting somewhere worth while as the forest thins out, granite slabs and outcrops break up the scrub, while farmlands in the upper Murray valley come into view an impressive 1400 metres below.

Then comes the anticlimax of the summit. It's a small and densely forested plateau that lacks an obvious highest point. At the plateau's southern edge, a lookout on the brink of a rocky drop-off gives an unusual perspective on the Main Range and the Grey Mare Range; in the foreground is the long ramble of the spur running all the way down to Bradneys Gap, just outside Khancoban.

This spur may suggest a challenge for the avid off-track walker, but those happy with a more modest achievement will retrace their route, or perhaps take another direction in the faint hope of finding a less scrubby alternative. You may even try for the nearby sum-

mit of Big Dargal Mountain; but entries in the logbook at Wheelers Hut suggest that it's an unrewarding slog.

Leaving Snakey Plain, the track dips into a gully and passes beneath a scatter of alpine ash. This is a taste of things to come as you'll soon be striding through a magnificent stand of these trees. Tall, thick-trunked, spaced well apart and sheltering a sparse understorey, these forest giants create a cathedral-like atmosphere that will make the next kilometre of track a highlight of your day.

A final descent brings you into the extensive frost hollow basins of the Tooma valley. Where the track bottoms out and starts to climb again, an inconspicuous side track branches off to Wheelers Hut. Even if you don't intend to use the hut for shelter, it's well worth an inspection. In place of the

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corrugated iron common to most huts that date back to the grazing era, the walls of Wheelers are built of rough-hewn slabs—and the floorboards likewise—derived from the alpine ash so abundant on the valley slopes above. This hut also has the luxury of an east-facing verandah, complete with a view of Jagungal.

#### **Wheelers Hut to Derschkos Hut**

A short stretch of off-track walking takes you from Wheelers Hut to the Dargals Track. You'll cross a couple of gullies on the way, one of them containing mounds of gravel which are relics of the Toolong gold rush. A less welcome sight, here and everywhere in the grassy valleys of the subalpine zone, are the excavations made by feral pigs.

After crossing Broadway Creek, you may need to wade through patches of bossiaea scrub before you reach the Dargals Track at its junction with the Hellhole Track. The latter runs parallel to the Tooma River, fords it and then tries to live up to its name by taking you on a strenuous climb out of the valley. Having gained the plateau of the Toolong Range, the track undulates and skirts the high plains before joining the Round Mountain Track, which quickly takes you to Derschkos Hut.

This functional, modern shelter once housed Snowy Mountains Authority workers engaged in measuring snowpack and stream flow. It nestles in a picturesque, small valley strewn with granite boulders. If you've kept your eyes on the ground, you will have noticed a frequent alternation between such outcrops of Snowy Mountains granite and the subtly different landforms derived from older, metamorphic rocks. On the low ridge south-east of the hut you'll find camp-sites with views across the high plain of Bogong Swamp to Jagungal, which now looms very close.

If you have daylight to spare and the weather is kind, you'll be itching to make the ascent. Take the Round Mountain Track to its signposted junction with the Grey Mare Track; take the left-hand fork to its crossing of the Tumut River's headwater stream. Just past the ford, a cairn marks the beginning of a foot track. Unmarked on the topographic maps, this pad burrows through a belt of subalpine scrub and ascends to the long ridge running southwest from the summit.

The climb eases and the track dwindle as you enter the alpine zone and sidle beneath crags and mounds of volcanic rock to reach the grassy ramp that angles up from the south. On this final stage your party should spread out and zigzag a little—the fact that Jagungal does not (yet) have a beaten path to the very summit is one of the things that make it special.

Having surveyed the view and savoured the ambience of this singular mountain, you may retrace your route. For the sake of a round trip, you could descend from the 'North Peak' and pick up another, unofficial track that will reunite you with the Grey

Mare Track near the weather station (which the Natmap depicts as a 'gauging station').

#### **Derschkos Hut to Round Mountain Track head**

Many walkers use the Round Mountain Track to get back to the road; if you're short of time or energy, it is a sensible choice. But it's scenically dull and receives a fair amount of management use. It has bridges over the creeks and gravelled sections—generally it feels more like a road than a track.

A longer but more pleasant alternative is to use the Grey Mare Track and then the Farm Ridge Track. You'll pass O'Keefes Hut, another relic of the grazing era full of character and decrepitude. Should you consider staying overnight here, be warned that the hut has a resident possum.

A little further on, the track drops suddenly to cross Bogong Creek in its steep-sided valley. An equally abrupt climb gets you on to Farm Ridge where, at the site of an old stockyard and a long-vanished hut,

it would be giving the game away to reveal their exact location. You'll need to cross and recross the river many times.

You'll know that you're near the end of the river traverse when its serpentine windings give way to a long, straight section. At its downstream end, the Farm Ridge Track comes into view. For some distance you will have seen evidence of the 1988 bushfire, which left whole swathes of country bristling with dead timber. On the climb out of the valley the track leads from unburnt to burnt and vigorously regenerating forest, and back again. You'll pass Round Mountain Hut, which narrowly escaped the conflagration and, shortly beyond, reach the Round Mountain Track.

The walk is nearly over but if you're not in a hurry you should spare an hour or so to climb Round Mountain. While this basalt hillock rises a modest 150 metres above the surrounding plateau, its isolated position makes it a splendid vantage point. Approach it by going back along the Round

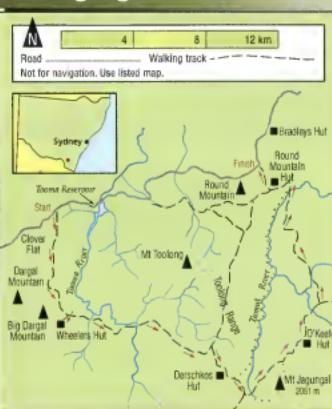
Mountain Track as far as Cool Plain; or continue to the track head and stroll along the road to the point nearest to Round Mountain's slopes. Either way, you can expect to begin with a scrub-bash which soon gives way to an unobstructed climb through gnarled snow gums—some of them, sad to say, killed by the 1988 fire. The summit makes a fitting finale; from here you can survey all the country through which you've walked during the past several days, as well as the whole sweep of the northern Snowy Mountains from the Main Range to the Bogong Peaks and the Brindabellas.

Finally, a word about extending the walk along the Theiss Village Track: be warned that this track is very overgrown and difficult to follow in places. The fact needs underlining, because the Khancoban sheet depicts it as a fully intact four-wheel-drive track—as does the information board at the Round Mountain Track head. The track begins clearly enough on Cool Plain, but you're almost certain to lose it among post-bushfire regrowth and log-jams on the descent to Oglivies Creek. From the latter point it becomes easier to head down-valley to the disused quarry and pick up the old road that served it. Despite occasional fallen timber, the road makes for a straightforward and pleasant stroll through alpine-ash forest. Eventually you will reach the bitumen at Out Station Creek.

Whether you finish on the high point of Round Mountain or by chasing a phantom track through labyrinth of scrub, you'll be sure to carry home a swagful of impressions from your visit to an alpine peak that may not be Australia's highest, but ranks among its most beautiful and distinctive. ☺

Trevor Lewis lives in Canberra, where for the past decade he has worked in residential care and the training of people with disabilities. He has been a keen bushwalker since his schooldays, and has walked throughout south-east Australia (including Tasmania), New Zealand and the Himalayas. He has occasionally contributed to *Wild* ever since the very first issue.

#### **Mt Jagungal area**



the Farm Ridge Track branches off. The last time I walked the full length of this track, in the autumn of 1997, it seemed to be reverting to a true 'walkers only' thoroughfare. In some places dual rutts had formed a single pad; in others, well established detours bypassed fallen trees.

The highlight comes when the track descends to meet the Tumut River. The little creek across which you stepped earlier in the day has already matured to a wide torrent running in a deep and dramatic valley.

A third possibility for this leg of the trip is simply to follow the Tumut's windings down from where the Grey Mare Track crosses it, or from somewhere nearby. You won't come across any major scrub, and you'll enjoy a distinctive landscape made all the more delightful by the fact that so few walkers seem aware of the route's existence. Several waterfalls and cascades await discovery, both on the main stream and its tributaries;

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# The Bogong High Plains

Above the tree line in some of Victoria's most celebrated high country,  
by Stephen Curtain. All photos by the author

**FOR EVEN THE MOST SEASONED WALKER,** the allure of the Bogong High Plains (in the northern Victorian Alps) is undeniable. Once you reach the crest of a fairly modest knoll in those wind-swept, grassy-tussock plains, the simplest of walking pleasures becomes apparent—the freedom, it seems, to journey in any direction. The vast breadth and width of this alpine expanse ensure that there is more than enough space for you to be 'truly lost'. A two- or three-day trip in the southwest district is a serene experience. Starting from the Mt Loch car park, descend into the forested valley of the Cobungra River before you regain higher ground; you can make a comfortable camp near an unassuming but attractive peak: Mt Jim. The following day, after descending into another river valley, the ascent of a rewarding, off-track route on Machinery Spur will reinvigorate your mind

and body as the completion of the walk draws near. The walk described in this article is a true 'alpine circuit'—one that may engender a deeper sense of Australia's alpine heritage.

## When to go

The best time to go is in spring/early summer when the daytime temperature is pleasantly cool, the wild flowers begin to emerge and the supply of drinking-water from creeks is plentiful. In winter, travel is not recommended because of deep snow.

## Safety

If the walk is undertaken in two days, an early start—say, 8 or 9 am—is recommended for both days. Be sure to fill your water-bottles

before you start the first day's walk. A magnetic anomaly exists in the Mt Jim area; this may wreak havoc on your compass—be sure to rely upon other means of navigation (for example, line of sight). Where possible, be sure to use hut toilets (rather than digging a hole); this practice ensures that water-borne nasties do not spread to potable water-supplies.

## Maps and references

The best map to use is the *Bogong Alpine Area 1:50 000* (Outdoor Leisure Series) map. *Bushwalking in the Alpine National Park*, by John Siseman, 1997 (MacStyle), is handy for background walking information. *The Mountain Pygmy-Possum* by Ian Mansergh & Linda Broome (1994, New South Wales University Press), is a good read.



## Access

From Melbourne, take the Hume Freeway and the Great Alpine Road to Bright. Continue south along the Great Alpine Road, through Harrietville. High up the road, ignore the turnoff to Dargo. Park in the Mt Loch car park, which is on the left side just before you reach the Mt Hotham alpine village. If you arrive at the village, you've missed the car park. Alternatively, it's possible to travel to the start of the walk from the south, from Gippsland, by way of Omeo and the Great Alpine Road.

## The walk

Mts Feathertop and Buffalo reside faithfully to the north and north-west, re-

*Nick Byrne rests awhile, admiring remnant snow on Mt Feathertop.*



**Above left,** magnetic anomaly, part one. A north bearing on Mt Jim. **Above right,** magnetic anomaly, part two. The bearing after the compass is lowered one metre!

spectively, as you arrive at the Mt Loch car park. Write your details in the intentions book at the walkers' information stand. Begin the walk by heading north-east along a vehicle track—also marked, at this early stage, as the Australian Alps Walking Track (by blue-triangle and yellow-diamond markers). Ignore a number of side foot tracks in favour of the vehicle track that keeps largely to the crest of the ridge. Soon you may glimpse a cairn (and a plaque) atop a small knoll—this

is a reminder of winter's fury, commemorating the life of Charles Derrick, a ski tourer, who perished nearby in a snowstorm in September 1965.

At Derrick Col (the lowest point on the ridge), take the walking track steeply upward—ignore the vehicle track that veers left. Higher up, this walking track rejoins the vehicle track. Continue along the latter. Soon you will reach a signposted junction. Ignore the left-hand sign. The right-hand sign indicates a track that leads to Derricks Hut (1.3 kilometres, 20 minutes away) and Dibbins Hut (5.5 kilometres, two hours away). Take this right-hand track (south) as it skirts the boundary of the Mt Hotham alpine ski resort. To the west, beyond the village of Mt Hotham, the Blue Rag Range rears its head above a criss-cross network of trails and lifts. Soon you will reach Derricks Hut, which is set amongst snow gums. Water may be available from the tank inside.

Continue along the AAWT and down Swindlers Spur. Tantalising glimpses of the summit crown of Mt Feathertop (strewn with snowdrifts in early spring) are possible through the treetops before you reach the Cobungra River valley—a lush oasis on a hot summer's day. A short distance west along the valley floor resides Dibbins Hut—

## the walk AT A GLANCE

Grade	Hard
Length	Two (hard) or three (moderate) days
Type	Subalpine/alpine, mountain rivers, tall forests
Region	North-east Victoria, Bogong High Plains
Best times	Spring/early summer
Special points	Be prepared for four seasons in one day



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built in 1920 by Arthur Dibbin. It replaced the original hut known as the 'Creep Inn'. Time may have passed, but the unwary visitor can still collect his or her scalp on the low doorway just as in the old days!

The hut makes a pleasant spot for lunch; otherwise walk a short distance downstream through tall grass to rest beside the river. After a well-earned snooze, cross the river and continue steeply up the walking track. At pole 232 leave your pack for a five-minute side-trip (south) to ascend Basalt Temple—a jumbled outcrop of loose, hexagonal-shaped, basalt columns. Be careful. After savouring the view, return to your pack to continue up through the snow-gum woodland.

Soon you will leave the company of the trees to strike out on to the Bogong High

## Day two

Head towards the west side of Mt Jim, then briefly contour its north-western slope. You should be able to find a faint foot track here that leads to the summit. Otherwise you can make your way up easily enough. Mt Jim has its own inimitable charm, stocked with a diverse range of natural features. It rises barely 40 metres from its surroundings and I must have lumbered past this pimple of a peak countless times over a decade before I gained its summit in November 2000.

From Mt Jim's northern flank, peer down upon an impressive, chaotic block stream—a 'river' of blocks formed from the alternate freezing and thawing of basalt rock. In the

pygmy possum (*Burramys parvus*). The shrubby veil of *Podocarpus* helps to cool *Burramys* in the heat of a summer's day. It is generally accepted that regional temperatures are rising and it is therefore of great concern that the future of this small creature remains uncertain.

Mt Jim is also the source of an extraordinary magnetic anomaly. Place your compass on the ground. Then raise the compass, say, a metre or so in the air. Are you suitably impressed?

Antics aside, from the summit of Mt Jim head north for about 700 metres towards a pole-line junction numbered pole 333. Along the way, tread carefully on rocks and boulders only to avoid trampling on fragile sphagnum bogs (often coloured vibrant-green). These works of nature are custom-built sponges that slowly release water all year—a vital component in the birth of all rivers that rise in the Australian Alps.

From the pole-line junction 333, turn left (west) to gain a slight rise. From here, the eastern fall of Mt Feathertop—Victoria's quintessential alpine peak—is an all-consuming sight. Discard your pack and plop yourself amongst the everlasting to maximise the enjoyment. When a breeze blows lazily from the valley below, this must surely rate as one of the finest vantage points on the Bogong High Plains. Continue downhill.

Weston's Hut, distinct with its steeply sloping roof, provides a brief rest. The walking track then descends the slope westward in a series of switchbacks. You will soon reach a fork junction. Take the right branch, which is the main track. Down further the track swings sharply away from a gully only to cross it later (collect water here).

Lower down, the walking track widens into a vehicle track. At a vehicle-track junction, go right. Cross a major bridge and soon, squinting down through the open forest, you should be able to see Blairs Hut. Continue down the vehicle track to the hut. The West Kiewa River flows only several metres away.

Ford the river (good swimming on a hot day) and continue northward along the vehicle track uphill to an obvious, narrow saddle several hundred metres from the river. Leave the vehicle track here in favour of an off-track route, south-west up Machinery Spur. Beyond the initial light scrub, open snow-gum forest abounds. The upper reaches of this spur are particularly attractive as an obvious line is followed along the ribbed crest of the spur, entirely devoid of scrub. Work your way up the spur through a number of fine, grassy flats to join a vehicle track in a saddle (Red Robin Gap). Follow the vehicle track upward (south) to emerge above the snow gums once more.

If time permits, visit the summit of Mt Loch; otherwise bypass it on your way to the vehicle track (adjacent to the signposted track junction marked 'Derricks Hut' and 'Dibbins Hut') from day one. Retrace your steps from here to the car park. ☺

Stephen Curtin loves to 'drop the knee' on Telemark skis in the Australian Alps. Back at camp and ensconced in his sack of down, he enjoys the quintessential back-country experience: overeating, being dehydrated and, inexplicably, the occasional naked romp.

## Bogong High Plains



Plains to meet a pole-line junction, south-west of Mt Jim.

Leave your pack at the junction for another worthwhile side-trip: Youngs Hut, some 20 minutes away. Head roughly south along another pole line (before re-entering snow-gum forest) and continue down a broad spur. Keep to the poles at all times. Keep an eye out for another pole line that veers left (south-east), accompanied by a walking track. Follow this downhill through the remains of old stockyard fences to the delightful Youngs Hut. Retrace your steps to your pack, where five or ten minutes further on (north-eastward), camp can be made anywhere near the upper reaches of High Plains Creek. Water is available.

distance, above this stony cascade, Mt McKay's summit tower and Mt Bogong, the State's highest peak, are discernible on the horizon. While we stood upon Mt Jim's summit we were fortunate to see a bird of prey—perhaps a kestrel—as it hovered for half a minute or so upon thermal winds. Suddenly it dive-bombed an unsuspecting victim below, no doubt its next meal.

In contrast, on the southern slopes, a thin, spindly veil of mountain plum pine (*Podocarpus lawrencei*) drapes majestically over a boulderfield. *Podocarpus* is the only native conifer that lives above the tree line and also plays an important role as a part of the habitat and as the home of Australia's only alpine-dependent mammal, the mountain

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\*Note: Model pictured is fully compressed



# Down sleeping-bags

In search of a good night's sleep in the bush, with *Stephen Curtain*

**CHINESE PROVERB: BUYING SLEEPING-BAG** is sometimes more difficult than getting out of one for 2 am wee-wee when camping in cold, bamboo forest.

On a chilly night, after 'completing one's business' behind a sapling, re-assuming the foetal position in a warm, down-filled cocoon must rate as bliss for most bushwalkers (even in wildest China). This is not the case when sleeping in your \$500 bag entails a nightly wrestling match. It's too hot. Too cold. Too small. Too tight! Sound familiar? Tales of sleeping in what seems more like an overpriced bodybag are surprisingly commonplace amongst my friends. With time to shop around, it's worth the effort to determine which model is to be your (potentially) life-long bedding companion. The 'right' sleeping-bag is one that matches your requirements of comfort, quality and appropriate warmth with your intended use/activity.

## Best suited for

While only a guide, this section indicates the manufacturer's main intended use for each bag. *Two-season* bags are best for travel and summer use. *Three-season* bags are suitable for cooler weather and some cold nights. *Four-season* bags are warranted for use on very cold nights and near the snow-line. *Four-plus season* bags are for snow-camping and alpine use.

## Shape

Two shapes of bags are surveyed.

*Tapered rectangular* bags are popular with sleepers who seek a generous and roomy fit (read: nocturnal ballet) and the versatility that this type of bag offers when it is unzipped and used like a doona in warmer camping weather or hostelling. *Mummy* bags are designed specifically for cooler/cold-weather use. This design often has a broader seasonal rating because it is so thermally efficient that equal or greater warmth is generated with significantly



*Inn your dreams! Do they make sleeping-bags in his size? Greg Tossel*

## Down sleeping-bags

		Best suited for	Shape	Weight (grams filled weight/ total weight)	Lodging cubic inches per ounce	Outer fabric	Zip side/ foot	Sizes available	Construction	Surveyor's choice	Comments	Approx. price, \$
<b>Aurora Australia</b>												
	Wanderer T	2 season	t	350 (1900)	700	Ripstop nylon	T, T	S, XL, XW	na	na		185
	Bladunner T†	3 season	t	500 (1200)	700	As above	T, T	S, XL, XW	na	na		265
	Hotham T†	3 season	t	650 (1400)	700	As above	S, S	S, XL, XW	••½	••½		280
<b>Fairydown New Zealand</b>												
	Superlite ST †	3–4 season	m	450 (1100)	700	DryLoft	T, nap	S, XL	na	na		530
	Cobra T†	4 season	t	700 (1600)	700	DryLoft	S, S	S, XL, W	na	na		580
	Scorpion T†	4+ season	m	700 (1500)	700	DryLoft	T, nap	S, XL, W	na	na		580
<b>Kathmandu China</b>												
	Columbus	3 season	t	550 (1100)	550	Taffeta	T, T	S, XL	•••	••½	Dryheat version available. Has a security pocket.	460
	Navigator	4 season	t	700 (1600)	650	Dryheat	T, T	S, XL	•••	•••	Taffeta version available. Has a security pocket.	660
	Moonraker	4 season	m	760 (1650)	650	Dryheat	T, nap	S, XL	•••	••	As above	700
<b>Macpac New Zealand</b>												
	Principle	2–3 season	m	250 (700)	650	Epic	½ length S, nap	S, XL	••••	•••	Half bag	450
	Tempest	3 season	t	700 (1350)	580	Epic	T, S	S, XL	••••	••½		550
	Solstice	4 season	m	700 (1450)	650	Epic	T, nap	S, XL, W	••••	•••	Down toe-muff traps warm air around feet. Reflective-tape tabs	700
<b>Mont Fiji*</b>												
	Brindabella	3–4 season	t	700 (1340)	650	Taffeta	T, T	S, XL	••••	•••		460
	Aurora	3–4 season	t	700 (1300)	650	Taffeta	T, T	W	••••	••••		460
	Spindrift	4 season	m	750 (1620)	650	Hydronautic XT	T, nap	S, XL	••••	••½		680
<b>Mountain Designs Australia</b>												
	Travelite 350	2–3 season	t	350 (950)	550	Sillex	T, S	S	••••	•••½		270
	Standhardt	3–4 season	m	800 (1400)	550	DryLoft	T, S	S, XL, W	••••	•••	Sillex version available. Optional neck muff available at extra cost	550
	Comice	4 season	m	700 (1600)	650	DryLoft	T, S	S, W	••••	••••		630
<b>Mountain Hardwear China</b>												
	Galaxy T	4 season	m	694 (1390)	600	Taffeta	T, nap	S, XW	••••	•••	Has an expandable (zippable) draught tube that varies roominess and warmth. Also comes with a mesh storage bag	500
	Universe	4+ season	m	838 (1630)	600	Taffeta	T, nap	S, XW	••••	•••	As above	550
	Galaxy SL	4 season	m	694 (1380)	600	Conduit SL	T, nap	S, XW	••••	••••	As above	600
<b>One Planet Australia</b>												
	Oiga T†	3 season	t	550 (1250)	550	Taffeta	T, T	S, XL	••••	•••	Has a security pocket	300
	Bushlife	4 season	t	700 (1450)	650	DryLoft	T, T	S	••••	••••	As above	650
	Winterite	4+ season	m	930 (1800)	650	DryLoft	T, nap	S	••••	•••	As above	750

## Down sleeping-bags continued

		Best suited for	Shape	Weight, grams. lit weight (total weight)	Loft rating, cubic inches per ounce	Outer fabric	Zip slide: side, foot	Sizes available	Construction	Surveyor's choice	Comments	Approx price
<b>Paddy Pallin Australia</b>	Cloudmaker	3-4 season	t	750 (1420)	570	DryLoft	T, S	S	****	***	PerTEX version available	500
	Bimber	3-4 season	m	500 (1200)	660	DryLoft	T, nap	S	****	***		580
	Freeling	4+ season	m	700 (1370)	660	DryLoft	T, nap	S, XL	****	****		650
<b>Puradown Australia</b>	Mt Moreton †	2 season	t	500 (1100)	600	Downproof nylon	S, S	S, XL, XXL, W	na	na		260
	Mawson 750 †	3 season	t	750 (1350)	600	PerTEX	S, T	S	na	na		360
	Extreme 900 †	3-4 season	t	900 (1500)	700	PerTEX Endurance	S, T	S	na	na		390
<b>Rick White Signature Series Australia</b>	Kashgar 380	2-3 season	t	380 (980)	650	PerTEX	T, S	S	****	****	Has a security pocket. Other customised sizes available	340
	Phoenix 650	4+ season	t	700 (1340)	805	Epic	T, S	S	****	****	Removable neck muff (50 gram fill varies warmth. Other customised sizes available	830
	South Col 950 †	4+ season	m	950 (1700)	805	Epic	T, nap	S	****	***	Other customised sizes available	1115
<b>Roman/Chinook Australia/China</b>	Europa Zero †	2-3 season	t	500 (1100)	550	Ripstop nylon	S, S	S	na	na		195
	Everest Cap 1 †	3 season	t	550 (1300)	650	PerTEX DWR	S, S	S, XL, XW, XWL	na	na		250
	Endurance 700	3-4 season	t	700 (1600)	650	PerTEX Endurance	S, S	S, XL, XW, XWL	***	***		350
<b>Salewa China</b>	Peru 700	3-4 season	m	700 (1500)	500	Ripstop PerTEX	T, nap	S, XL	***	***		350
	Diadem 500 †	3 season	m	500 (1200)	600	As above	T, nap	S, XL	na	na		370
	Diadem 800 †	4 season	m	800 (1650)	600	As above	T, nap	S, XL	na	na		440
<b>Sherpa Australia</b>	Traveler 1	2 season	t	400 (1100)	750	Ripstop nylon	S, S	S, XL	***½	***		200
	Traveler 2	2-3 season	t	500 (1200)	750	As above	S, S	S, XL	***½	***		240
	Alpine Dry 800 †	4 season	t	800 (1600)	750	EmphateX/ Ripstop nylon	S, S	S, XL	na	na		400
<b>Snowgum China</b>	Vesper 550	2 season	t	550 (1200)	600	Taffeta	T, T	S	***	***½		270
	Vesper 700	3 season	t	700 (1350)	600	Taffeta	T, T	S, XL	***	***½		300
	Vesper 850 †	3-4 season	t	850 (1500)	600	Taffeta	T, T	S, XL	***	***		350
<b>Summit Australia</b>	Savanna 750	3 season	t	750 (1300)	600	Ripstop PerTEX	T, S	S, XL	****	****		350
	Tundra 700	3 season	t	700 (1300)	600	EmphateX/ Ripstop PerTEX	T, S	S, XL	****	***		440
	Tundra 900	4 season	t	900 (1500)	600	As above	T, S	S, XL	****	***		480

• poor    •• average    ••• good    •••• excellent    Shape: t tapered rectangular, m mummy    Type of zip slide: S single, T twin    Sizes available: S standard, XL extra long/large, XW extra wide, XWL extra wide and long. W women's version, nap not applicable    na not assessed    † not seen by surveyor    †† not seen by referee    \* the box foot on Mont mummy bags is made in Australia  
The country listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country in which the products are made

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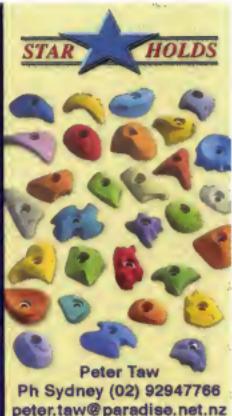
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less down, thereby reducing weight and packing space.

### Weight

The 'fill weight' and 'total weight' figures were supplied by the manufacturer. The majority of bags surveyed weigh *more* (up to another 25 per cent!) than is quoted in the table.

### Buy right

- If you are a cold sleeper, buy a bag with a higher season rating (it's better to be too warm than too cold). You can vary the warmth of a bag in other ways. Use an inner sheet. Wear a beanie to control the loss of body heat through your head and/or wear more clothing. It is also possible to add a 'bag liner'—these are lightweight, down-filled or fleece liners that can dramatically boost the warmth rating of your bag. A bivvy-bag may be another option. The use of a good-quality insulation mat is a must.
- Try on a sleeping-bag in the shop. Be sure that the inner is soft to touch. Is there enough room, especially around the hips and shoulders? What is the overall feel and is it comfortable? Is it long/short enough? If in doubt, consider a longer/wider/women's-fit or a custom-made bag.
- Check the packed size of a bag in its stuff sack. If it is quite large, consider the use of a compression stuff sack (if one is not supplied).

### Loft rating

The loft rating was supplied by the manufacturer/distributor. 'Loft' indicates how many cubic inches one ounce of down will expand to fill and describes the puffiness of a bag which is an indication of a bag's ability to trap warm air.

### Outer fabric

Epic, Dryloft, Empatex, Hydronauta and Pertex Endurance are all water resistant and breathable outer fabrics that guard against external moisture (in a humid tent or snow-cave) more effectively than standard (nylon-based) fabrics. The water-resistant and breathable fabrics make a bag *warmer*, too, although it is still necessary to air and dry your bag after using it. Taffeta, Pertex, Siltex and Ripstop (types of nylon) are all highly breathable alternatives.

### Zip slide

A single- or twin zip is at the side of each bag and at the foot of tapered rectangular bags. It is possible to zip some bags to a partner-bag as long as the zips are compatible.

### Sizes available

Make sure that you 'test-drive' different models in the shops. Only then will you get

a sense of the feel of each bag. The comfort and fit of the 'standard-size' bags varied for my size (solid build and height 180 centimetres). It should also be noted that there are several excellent women's-fit bags available. These usually shorter bags can make better use of down placement and are more thermally efficient. They are suitable for women and, possibly, for shorter men. Other sizes, such as extra long, are as indicated.

### Down

A sleeping-bag is a cocoon of down that traps body heat to insulate the sleeper from cold and moisture. You will encounter two different types of down in your travels: duck and goose, said to be sourced either from Europe or Asia (China). The amount of down used gives a reasonable indication of a bag's warmth. This is expressed as a total fill quantity. The grading of down (not mentioned in the table but accounted for in a bag's assessment) is represented as a ratio of 'fluffy down' to 'stalky feathers' and was also considered by the surveyor.

### Construction

The design and quality of the bag, and the construction of a number of features determined this rating: features such as a neck muff; the position of draught tube/s; the type, cut and placement of baffles; and the quality of stitching. A well-fitting and insulated, contoured hood was also a factor.

### Surveyor's choice

The emphasis in this section is on the sum of desirable traits in a bag. For example: is it lightweight? Does it pack to an acceptably small size? Is it reasonably priced? (Let's hope it doesn't require you to donate an organ in order to pay for it!) There are exceptions, but the old adage applies: you get what you pay for. I have particularly kept in mind the beginner to intermediate bushwalker and those who require bags for snow use. For cooler and cold weather/snow use, I have a bias towards bags that are made, in part or wholly, from a water-resistant, breathable outer fabric.

Seek the assistance of shop staff when making your choice. The bags surveyed are only a selection of what's available on the market but most are of a very high quality; 'duds' are rare. Just remember: the perfect sleeping bag for all uses has not yet been invented!

### Approximate price

For standard-size model, as at March–April 2001.

Stephen Curtin loves to 'drop the knee' on Telemark in the Australian Alps. Back at camp and ensconced in his sack of down, he enjoys the quintessential back-country experience: overeating, being dehydrated and, inexplicably, the occasional naked romp.

This survey was refereed by Greg Care.

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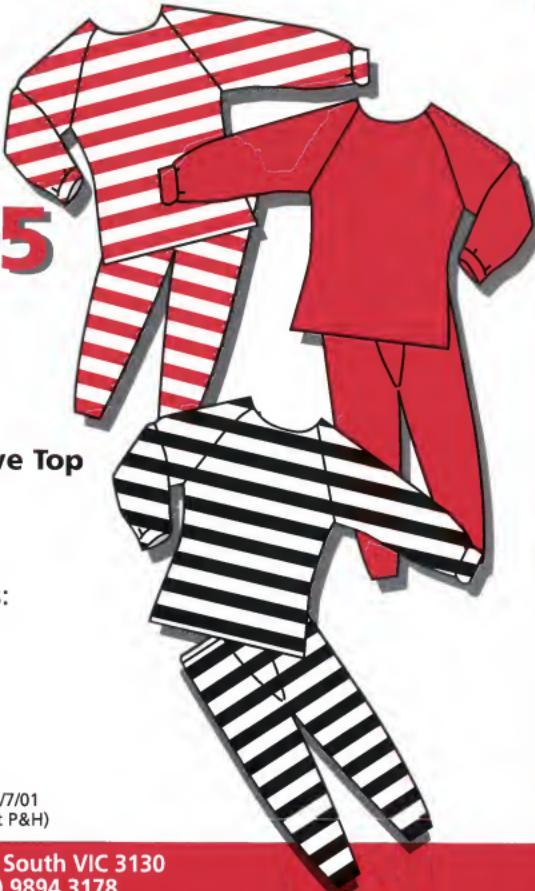
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# Lightweight Meals

**Food to go, by Michael Hampton**



*When the tide goes out the tucker goes in; Blackstone Bay, Alaska. Iain Groves*

**MOST WALKERS WOULD AGREE THAT THE** preparation and consumption of food are high on the prime-activities during-a-bush-walk scale. Poor or insufficient food can (will) wreak havoc on morale, and good nutrition increases in importance the longer you stay out. Not everyone is a bush chef. Menu planning and meal preparation can be a chore, especially at the end of a hard day. In the range of lightweight meals in this survey there should be something to keep everyone happy, from carnivore to vegetarian.

The meals are all of the savoury 'grab-and-go' variety and will be most attractive to those who are too busy to spend time preparing a menu and meals beforehand and, of course, to those undertaking multi-day forays when weight (including fuel) is of great importance. All meals are available from outdoors shops throughout Australia but you'll be lucky to find more than two brands at any one shop (or chain of shops).

I invited a number of friends (two male, four female) to a 'freeze-dried dinner party' where the meals were prepared strictly

according to instructions. This survey is not a lab test; the weights and food value statistics are supplied by the manufacturers, the bullets by our testers. Brands differ in their 'serving size'. For some the measurement refers to the mass of the contents when they are dry; others refer to the mass of the reconstituted product. I found that generally a 'serve' translates to one to one-and-a-half metric cups of rehydrated food.

## Method of drying

Foodstuffs are made 'light' by removing the moisture. This is done either by dehydration or freeze-drying. Quite a few meals use a combination of both methods. The freeze-dried process entails ice precipitation being drawn from frozen food in a vacuum and there is only a marginal alteration in food value. The dried food thus becomes extremely porous and will rehydrate in one or two minutes. Dehydration, on the other hand, anyone can do at home. The food is put on a tray and blasted with hot air. This process is less subtle than freeze-drying and

breaks down the cell structure of the food. The reconstitution or 'cooking' of the meals surveyed ranges from the simple addition of boiling water in the case of meals that have been freeze-dried (some reheating may be required) to boiling and simmering—sometimes it may take up to 15 minutes—for dehydrated meals although a good pre-soaking will radically reduce the boiling time required.

## Weight

The weights given are those that appear on the packet, with the meal in its freeze-dried or dehydrated state.

## Energy per serve

Like soldiers, walkers march on their stomachs. Energy is measured in kilojoules. The recommended daily intake for the average adult male is 11 600 kilojoules. If you average the energy needs of male and female walkers, from zero exertion to maximum exertion in cold conditions, you get an average daily

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#### Stroganoff/Wine Sauce

Chili Mexicana  
Couscous Almondine  
Mediterranean Pasta Delight  
Garden Vegetable Stew  
Oriental Sweet and Sour  
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Maritime Pasta Supreme  
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Tandoori Curry  
Instant Dal Delight  
Powdered Vegetable Shortening  
Blueberry Cobbler  
No-bake Choc Chew Cookies

highlighted with red wine and sour cream sauce,

a spicy bean-and-tomato-sauce delight with a creamy mushroom sauce.

Greek pasta with mixed vegetables and a zesty sauce, vegetables with their own special sauce and spices.

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# Lightweight meals

		Method of drying	Weight, grams	Energy per serve, kJ/100g	Carbohydrates per serve, grams	Protein per serve, grams	Number of serves per packet (manufacturers' recommendation/touroperator's recommendation)	Packaging	Preparation	Tastiness	Value	Comments	Average price, \$
<b>Adventure Foods Australia</b>													
	Lamb casserole	F	110	2274	40.6	38.3	1 (less than 1)	● 1/2	● 1/2	●●	●●	All Adventure Foods products contain foil packaged items that fold but do not reseal. All need less liquid and more soaking than stated	9.00
	Beef & black bean	F	75	1530	14.5	35.5	As above	● 1/2	● 1/2	●●	●●		9.50
	Tuna mornay	F	110	2135	38.8	38.4	1 (1)	● 1/2	● 1/2	●●●	●●		11.00
<b>AlpineAire USA</b>													
	Albacore tuna with noodles & cheese	Both	156	na	40	17	2 (1)	●● 1/2	●●	● 1/2	●	All AlpineAire products come in zip-lock packets that don't stand	16.50
	Santa Fe black beans & rice (v)	Both	184	na	69	11	2 (2)	●● 1/2	●●●	●●●	●●		16.50
	Spaghetti manmara with mushrooms (v)	Both	156	na	52	13	2 (1.5)	●● 1/2	●●●	●●	● 1/2	Unusual to find a vegetarian spaghetti 'manmara'	16.50
<b>Backcountry Cuisine New Zealand</b>													
	Beef and pasta hotpot	Both	90	1657	46.7	26.9	1 (less than 1)	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	Backcountry Cuisine packets are not resealable. They are also available in two- (\$11.50) and five- (\$26.00) serve packs	7.50
	Honey soy chicken	Both	90	1648	55.6	17.5	As above	●●●	●●●	●●	●●		7.50
	Roast lamb and vegetables	Both	90	1680	48.7	20.3	As above	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●		7.50
<b>Backpackers Pantry USA</b>													
	Spaghetti with sauce (v)	F	195	na	53	12	2 (less than 2)	●	●	●● 1/2	●●●	All meals have free-standing zip-lock pouch except Spaghetti with sauce	10.00
	Wild West chilli beans (v)	F	181	na	49	14	2 (1.5)	●●●	●●●	●● 1/2	●●		12.00
	Thai spicy peanut sauce with rice & vegetables (v)	F	227	na	48	15	2 (1.5)	●●●	●●●	●● 1/2	●● 1/2		13.50
	Kathmandu curry with lentils & potatoes (v)	F	188	na	38	10	2 (2)	●●●	●●●	●●●	●● 1/2	Kathmandu curry is filling and tastes good	14.50
	Lasagna (v)	F	198	na	41	17	2 (1.5)	●●●	●●●	●●	● 1/2		15.50
<b>Harvest Foodworks Canada</b>													
	Chili Mexicana (v)	D	210	1548	68	22	2 (2)	●●●	●●	●●	●●	All meals come in good plastic bags with up to three paper sachets. All meals need a good presoak	17.00
	Maritime pasta supreme	D	217	1713	68	19	2 (less than 2)	●●●	●●	●●●	● 1/2		17.00
	Stroganoff	D	267	1882	72	25	As above	●●●	●●	● 1/2	● 1/2	Disappointed to find a Stroganoff without many mushrooms	17.00
	Tandoori curry	D	194	1125	53	25	2 (2)	●●●	●●	●●	●●		17.00
<b>Soft Path Cuisine Canada</b>													
	Barbie's dhal (v)	D	350	2494	114	25	2-3 (more than 2)	●●● 1/2	●●	●●●	●●●●	All Soft Path meals are organic and require presoaking. Measurements are marked on outer bag. Some require two pots and the chutney is fiddly. Huge tasty serves	20.50
	Bueno bean soup (v)	D	278	2100	94	27	As above	●●● 1/2	●●	●●●	●●●●		20.50
	Prame miso stew (v)	D	315	2515	122	27	As above	●●● 1/2	●●	●● 1/2	●●●●		20.50
	Curry inna huni (v)	D	435	3166	141	31	As above	●●● 1/2	●●	●●●	●●●●		20.50
<b>Tinderry Mountain Foods Australia</b>													
	Beef & mushroom risotto (v)	D	150	na	na	na	1-2 (1)	●	●●	● 1/2	●●	All meals benefit from a good presoak. Packaging could be sturdier. No ingredients are listed	8.00
	Chicken curry & rice (v)	D	150	na	na	na	1-2 (1)	●	●●	● 1/2	● 1/2		8.00
	Chicken momay (v)	D	150	na	na	na	1-2 (1)	●	●●	●	● 1/2		8.00
	Ratatouille & pasta (v)	D	110	na	na	na	1-2 (1)	●	●●	● 1/2	●●	A loose use of the description 'ratatouille'	8.00
	Spaghetti Bolognaisse (v)	D	110	na	na	na	1-2 (1)	●	●●	●	● 1/2	As above for 'Bolognaisse'	8.00
● poor    ●● average    ●●● good    ●●●● excellent	na not available	(v) vegetarian	F	freeze-dried	D	dehydrated	†	not seen by referee	The country listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country in which the products are made				

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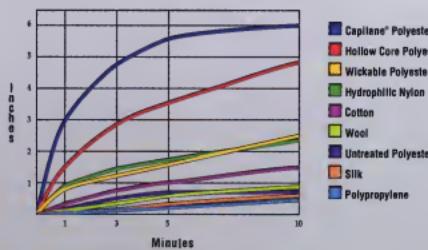
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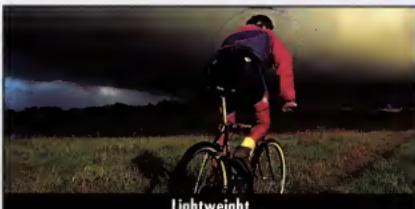
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energy input requirement of around 10 000 to 16 000 kilojoules. Men may need up to 23 000 kilojoules in extreme conditions. The food value figures in the table are supplied by the manufacturer. Some US brands do not provide energy data although they do indicate the fat content of their products. This may be due to government regulations but most bushwalkers would agree that eight days out in South-West Tasmania is not a time to worry about fat content! Note: *Tinderry Mountain Foods* is yet to have its meals analysed.

## Tastiness

The bullets represent the average of the marks given to each product by a cross-section of testers. The testers were not impressed with meals that didn't measure up to a pretentious name. Meals with dehydrated chicken (it stays chewy), and excessively salty meals were also poorly received.

## Buy right

- Take into account the amounts of fuel and water and the number of vessels required to prepare the meal you have chosen. If you will be carrying very little fuel, it is a good idea to select meals that require less cooking time. You may find freeze-dried meals more suitable.
- Don't choose meals by simply measuring the bullet ratings against the prices. Take note of the number of servings per packet and the weight of the dried product, especially if weight is a concern.
- Try the meals before you take them on a trip. You may have very different ideas from the surveyor about how much food makes a satisfying meal. Avoid carrying more than you need or going hungry by sampling the stuff—both for quality and quantity!

## Value

The testers made judgments after preparing and tasting the meals, considering the data, and balancing the information with the recommended retail price. Once again the bullets show the average of the marks given to each product.

## Comments

Any other relevant information and observations are noted in this column. The comment may be about the brand overall, or concern a specific meal.

## Approx price

This is the recommended retail price shown in half-dollars. The *actual* retail price may vary significantly from the figures in the table.

To finish, I'd like to offer a couple of tips. The first is that when possible you should try to presoak dehydrated meals. Use a long wooden spoon (a stick would suffice) to ensure that the liquid reaches the bottom corners of those freeze-dried packets. Big eaters should carry some additional, quick-cooking noodles, pasta or mashed potatoes to bulk out their meals. *Bon appétit!*

*Michael Hampton* (see Contributors in Wild no 17) lives close to Australia's largest Nordic skiing area, Lake Mountain. A ski instructor, he is happiest exploring snow-laden alpine-ash forests looking for photographic subjects, or gliding over the treeless high plains in search of remote, cross-country downhill adventure.

This survey was refereed by *Scott Drummond*.

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## Designs on the world

One of Australia's biggest outdoors equipment manufacturers and retailers has announced changes which are expected to have far-reaching effects on Australia's entire outdoors equipment industry. Brisbane-based **Mountain Designs** has a significant new investor by the name of Greg Nunn who sold his electrical manufacturing business last year for a reported \$100 million. Mountain Designs CEO Kim Carrigan reports that this injection of funds will enable the business to become a global brand with 'a cutting-edge range at competitive prices'. This naturally requires that new positions be created in the company. The first to be announced is a fascinating one: Mountain Designs founder **Rick White** is to return after years of 'exile in the wilderness'. White was forced out during a period of financial difficulty in the early 1990s. White's vast experience will be brought to bear as Research & Development Manager in an effort to upgrade the Mountain Designs range. His specialty sleeping-bag manufacturing business, **Rick White Signature Series**, is to be incorporated into Mountain Designs. A decision is yet to be made about the future of the Rick White brand.

## Even more from Gore

As announced in *Wild* no 80, **WL Gore** and Associates has released a new fabric, **Gore-Tex XCR**, which is reputedly the highest performance Gore-Tex on the market. Gore tells us that XCR is 25 per cent more breathable than 'classic' Gore-Tex and that it is matched with the toughest textiles to create a three-layer fabric which is highly breathable and very durable.

XCR (eXtended Comfort Range) outerwear garments are available from Macpac stockists, Mountain Designs and Paddy Pallin shops. Prices start from \$500.

## Moving house



*The Makalu Mountain Jacket is now made in Australia.*

The **Makalu** garment brand grabbed our attention just a year ago. It was manufactured in Nepal for the Australian market. Makalu has relocated its manufacturing to Australia due to the various difficulties of off-shore manufacturing. A new range of 100 per cent Australian made garments has been

## Looking sheepish

Synthetic fleece products have dominated the outdoors clothing market for years but lately an old favourite has been making a comeback: Many outdoors-clothing manufacturers are returning to wool. It is soft against the skin, less smelly and it wicks vapour (as well as liquid moisture) at a rate superior to some synthetic equivalents.

### Icebreaker and Macpac

have released merino wool thermal- and travel-wear garments.

The latest manufacturer to jump on the wool bandwagon is the surfwear company **Ripcurl**, which has entered the mountain-wear market with the **Sportswool Insulayer** range.

Sportswool is a newly developed bi-layer fabric with an inner layer of merino wool combined with an outer layer of hydrophilically treated polyester. Ripcurl tells us that the combination allows superior heat transfer and dispersal of moisture vapour away from the skin—apparently wool fibres have an extremely complicated internal structure which increases its capacity to wick moisture. Long-sleeved tops RRP \$99.95.

Still on the theme of wool, **Fairydown** has released the **Merino sport zip neck**, a thermal top with merino wool against the skin and a polyester outer



*Left, Ripcurl tries the mountain-wear market on for size with the Sportswool Insulayer range. Right, Fairydown's Nazomi Boulevard has the unusual combination of Gore Windstopper with a wool face-fabric.*

released. The **Mountain Jacket** is designed for back-country skiing and has four pockets, a fleece neck-warmer and Ripstop shoulders for extra strength underneath a pack. It is made from Entrant GII XT, which we are told has an excellent ratio of weight-to-waterproofness and breathability.

Also in the new range are **Isobar Jackets** and **Vests**, which are made from a three-layer waterproof and breathable fleece fabric. The Mountain Jacket is available at RRP \$485, Isobar Jacket at RRP \$350 and Vest at RRP \$180. For more information see [www.makalu.com.au](http://www.makalu.com.au)

## Knick-Knacks

\* **Berghaus** has just updated its range of popular **Dart day packs**. The manufacturer says that the new features include a kinetic three-dimensional mesh back panel, improved padding and larger exterior lid pockets. The Dart 30 and Dart 40 also have sternum straps and large expandable front pockets which fit two standard-sized water-bottles. Available from Berghaus stockists. Prices range from \$90 to \$120.

\* **Gerber** has released a new version of its ever-popular Multi-tool—the compact sport **Multi-plier 400**. This version of the multi-tool has the same features as the **Multi-plier 600**, but is three-quarters of the size. At 172 grams the tool includes pliers, screwdrivers and scissors. RRP \$90. (See *Wild* no 82 for information on new Leatherman multi-tools.)

\* **Johnson & Johnson** claims that the long-held belief that to leave a minor wound uncovered helps it to heal faster is a myth. In fact, Johnson & Johnson claims that the reverse is true. It has come up with a new version of its famous original product, the **Band-Aid Advanced Healing** adhesive bandage. It is broader than a standard BandAid, waterproof, designed to stick for several days and resembles a 'second skin'. It occurred to us that this product would be excellent for preventing or treating blisters. ☺

Products (on loan to *Wild*) and/or information about them, including colour slides, are welcome for possible review in this department. Written items should be typed, include recommended retail prices and preferably not exceed 200 words. Send them to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.

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## Turning up the heat

Greenhouse gases and global warming are two concepts that are familiar to the worldwide community and remain among the most significant environmental problems worldwide.

Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) Executive Director, Don Henry, cites the key figures of a recently released report, *Climate Change 2001: The Scientific Basis*. He notes the report predicts that global temperatures will rise between 1.4 and 5.8 degrees Celsius over the coming century; it is potentially a much higher figure than the 3.5 degrees predicted in 1995.

The report was prepared by a group who are arguably the world's leading climate change experts. For the first time, they were in agreement that the global warming that has occurred during the 20th century has been caused by human activity; in other words, by pollution.

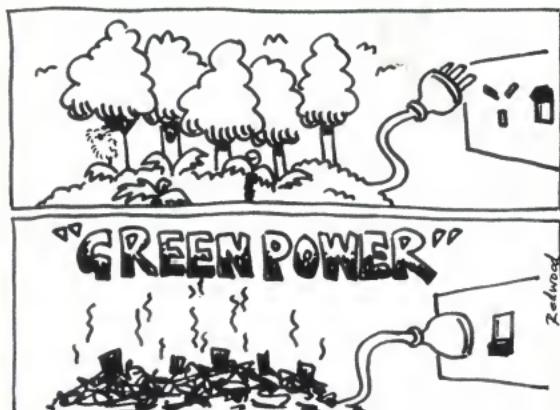
According to Friends of the Earth, Melbourne, the report indicates that Australia will be harder hit by climate change than had previously been anticipated. It predicts that droughts, flooding and fires will become more frequent. Alpine areas are reported to be particularly vulnerable. It is possible that the loss of all skiable areas in Australian alpine regions will occur in as little as 50–80 years. The Melbourne Age has reported that changes to global weather patterns appear to have caused treelines at Mt Hotham and Falls Creek to shift uphill. The colder temperatures that have prevented trees from growing on alpine snow plains in the past have ceased to have this effect. There are saplings growing in places that previously were bare and some trees are up to eight metres tall.

Scientists have predicted that the Great Barrier Reef may be threatened if ocean temperatures rise. If the reef is covered with warmer waters—a likely outcome of global climate change—the coral polyps, which are the building blocks of the reef, spit out the algae that live in their tissues. The polyps then die and the reef is bleached of colour.

It is estimated that we need to reduce greenhouse gasses by up to 70 per cent. To make significant reductions we will need to change both the way we consume energy and how it is produced for human use. Henry notes: 'We have much to gain by acting now to reduce greenhouse pollution—a more stable climate, protected people and nature, and vibrant economic opportunities.'

For more information, see the ACF publication *Natural Advantage: A Blueprint for a Sustainable Australia*. Available from ACF offices for \$27; phone (03) 9416 1166 or 1800 332 510.

## In case you were wondering... native forests are *not* a renewable resource



The Howard Government's Renewable Energy Electricity Act (January 2001) defines native-forest woodchips as an acceptable 'renewable source' of fuel to be burnt to produce electricity as an alternative to coal. Their rationale is that woodchips are a 'waste product' of the logging industry. In Victoria 85 per cent of native-forest logging is for woodchips, which would ap-

pear to indicate that woodchips are the central 'product', rather than a byproduct, of logging. The Victorian Government has finally admitted that forests are being cut down faster than they can regrow and the State's forests are presently being extensively overlogged. It is arguable that individual trees and plantations are renewable but ecosystems are not.

## Helicopters over Hinchinbrook

Developers Keith Williams and Grant Kenny (yes, that Grant Kenny) are trying to obtain a permit to run helicopter tours over Hinchinbrook Island and Passage.

The Hinchinbrook Island Management Plan states, 'low-level scenic flights over or adjacent to the park are considered incompatible with the peaceful experience sought by other park visitors'. Even flights above 500 metres—which is what the applicants are requesting—are unacceptable.

## Feral horses afoot

The Minister for the Environment in New South Wales has imposed a ban on aerial culling of feral horses in all National Parks in New South Wales. This follows claims that an operation to shoot more than 600 horses in Guy Fawkes River National Park last October was inhumane.

However, an independent report by Sydney University Veterinarian Professor Tony English supported the actions of the National Parks & Wildlife Service in carrying out the cull. He confirmed that the cull was carried out humanely according to RSPCA-endorsed procedures and was the most practical method to control the high numbers of horses in the park. Further inquiries have been commissioned by the government.

In Kosciuszko National Park, horse numbers are even higher. The NPWS is hamstrung in removing, stabilising numbers or sometimes even conducting counts of horses in the park. Recently the expanding population has forced herds into the alpine area. Horse lovers have lobbied against removal of the horses because they regard the cultural values of the horse as more important than the internationally significant natural values. The major damage that both feral and recreational horses cause to Kosciuszko National Park and other National Parks severely compromises the purpose of these conservation areas.

Andrew Cox

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## Plan of Management for Morton and Budawang National Parks

The Plan of Management for Morton and Budawang National Parks was recently adopted, bringing into force a number of measures proposed in a draft during public consultation in 1998. The parks, covering 194 000 hectares, stretch from Bundanoon in the north, through the Ettrema and Budawang wilderness areas, to the Kings Highway in the south.

The plan represents a long overdue management regime to preserve the special values of the region. The majority of the parks will be managed as two wilderness areas, with day use and vehicle access confined to the National Park edges.

In the Budawangs, the plan implements camping- and wood-fire bans (though some already existed) at Monolith Valley, Castle Saddle, Hidden Valley and the Vines. Camping is also no longer permitted in caves and under rock overhangs, except in those designated by the NPWS.

The plan allows the provision of basic toilets to be considered at Cooyoyo Creek, Bibbenluke, Burrumbee Brook and Styles Plain. Education in the tenet of minimum-impact bushwalking will be a high priority. Increased controls, such as a permit system or the imposition of limits on group sizes, will be introduced if other strategies fail to control the environmental impacts of bushwalkers.

AC

## Newnes Plateau mine expansion

The New South Wales Government is considering the approval of expansions to Clarence Colliery, an underground coalmine on Newnes Plateau adjacent to the Blue Mountains National Park and in the wilderness-listed headwaters of the Wollangambie River and Bungleboori Creek. Already the mine causes a black sludge to form in the Wollangambie, diverts water-tables and has caused cracks in cliffs. The expanded mine under Gooches Crater and other upland swamps risks eliminating rare water-dependent plants and degrading the quality and quantity of water in creeks.

AC

### Act now

A decision is expected shortly. Write letters opposing the expansion to the New South Wales Minister for Mining, Eddie Obeid, and the Minister for the Environment, Bob Debus, at Parliament House, Macquarie St, Sydney, NSW 2000.

## Jets over the Blue Mountains

Australian Fighter Flight Centre set up a business in October 2000 flying clients in jet fighters on 'strike missions' through the

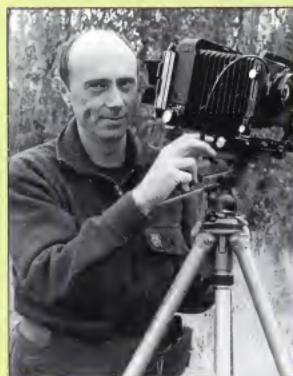
Burratorong and Coxs valleys in the southern Blue Mountains. The jets tear up the valley floors at up to 900 kilometres an hour, presumably above the legal minimum of 152 metres above the ground, 'bomb' a mock target, then shoot up into the sky. The company operates several flights every week, but hopes to run up to 1000 a year.

AC

### Act now

Write to the Federal Minister for Transport, John Anderson, and the Minister for the Environment, Robert Hill, at Parliament House, Canberra, ACT 2600. Ask them to ban low-level commercial jet flights over the Blue Mountains and other National Parks. Call for minimum heights which are several kilometres above the highest surface features to be set for commercial flights.

## Photographer honoured



David Tatnall is currently making photographic records of Melbourne's Merri Creek grasslands which are threatened by a freeway proposal.  
Tatnall collection

The Melbourne-based photographer David Tatnall has recently been honoured for his lifelong work in environmental photography.

The Victorian National Parks Association at its recent annual meeting gave Honorary Life Membership to Tatnall for his 'outstanding contribution to nature conservation in Victoria through photography'. Tatnall has been a member of the Association for 30 years.

Parks Victoria has also recently awarded Tatnall the Kookaburra Award for Outstanding Individual Contribution to Victoria's Parks.

## WOOD-CHIPS

\* The Kenyan Government has announced its intention to excise more than 67 000 hectares from its forest reserves. It is anticipated that as many as ten further forest blocks may be excised from Kenyan reserves in addition to those currently proposed.

\* Seven conservationists from Bogota were murdered while on a trip to the National Park of Puracé in February. It is believed that the murderers belong to paramilitary groups but no one has been charged in connection with the crimes as fear prevents witnesses from giving evidence.

\* As reported in the Melbourne *Sunday Age*, a founding member of Greenpeace, David Mc Taggart, was killed in a car crash on 23 March. Mc Taggart, a Canadian by birth, was described as a 'charismatic, powerful and unique man who brought out the best in others'.

\* Fourteen new species of wildlife have already been added to the nation's endangered species list in 2001, as reported in the Melbourne newspaper, the *Herald Sun*, on 5 April. Conservation groups welcome the inclusion of wildlife habitats for the first time. The inclusion protects habitats named on the list under Commonwealth law.

\* Carnarvon Station, otherwise known as Bidjara country, in southern Queensland, has been bought by the Australian Bush Heritage Fund with the assistance of the Commonwealth Government's Natural Heritage Trust. (See the advertisement on page 16 of *Wild* no 80 and the insert in the same issue.) The new 590 square kilometre reserve is the home of seven endangered ecosystems and an abundance of plants, birds, reptiles and animals. Bush Heritage will include the indigenous custodians of the land in the management of the Aboriginal cultural sites on the property.

\* *20 Things You Can Do For Birds* is a guide compiled by Birds Australia, a volunteer-based organisation whose members are fighting for the survival of a number of native bird species. You'll receive a copy of the guide for free if you donate \$20 or more to Birds Australia. Phone 1300 730 075.

\* The ACF is calling for nominations for the Peter Rawlinson Conservation Award 2001, which is presented in recognition of the outstanding voluntary contribution by a group or individual in conservation of the environment. The prize is a sculpted momento and \$3000 to spend on further environmental work. Details are available on the ACF's Web site: [www.acfonline.org.au](http://www.acfonline.org.au) or telephone Michelle Matthews (03) 9926 6704. ☺

Readers' contributions to this department, including colour slides, are welcome. Typed items of less than 200 words are more likely to be published. Send them to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.

Some things  
just keep  
getting  
better...



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# Ice trek

## A polar trek turned sour

### **Ice Trek**

by Eric Philips (HarperCollins, 2000, RRP \$29.95).

This book is an account of the 1998–99 trek to the South Pole by Jon Muir, Eric Philips and Peter Hillary. It is also an examination of why the trio made the slowest trip to the South Pole in history, and why they failed to start the return journey.

In recounting their struggle towards the Pole, Philips describes their daily progress and routine, and any contact they had with the outside world. He also explores the problems faced by the group: varying individual performances, interpersonal tension and conflict, and conflicting agendas—not to mention blizzards, illness and equipment failure.

Philips tries to be fair in relating their collective story—he uses excerpts from the diaries of two members of the group as well as quotations from film footage.

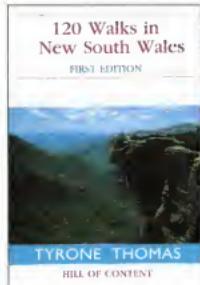
This book has it all—hardship, success, disappointment, conflict and joy. Read it for a fuller picture of what modern polar travel entails.

*Naomi Peters*

### **120 Walks in NSW**

by Tyrone Thomas (Hill Of Content Publishing, 2000, RRP \$32.50).

Tyrone Thomas is a prolific writer of bushwalking guidebooks. This volume is an updated and expanded version of his 100



*Bushwalks in NSW.* To the author's credit, he has rewalked all the original walks as well as completing a new series. Each walk description includes the date when it was

last checked. As in the previous volume, most of the walks are day-trips although longer walks are included and suggestions are provided for extensions of some of the day walks. A great deal of the geographic area of New South Wales is included in the range of walks and there is sure to be material of interest to bushwalkers who wish to extend their knowledge of new areas. This book provides a very useful guide for visitors to the State.

*David Noble*

### **Discovering...Yengo and Dharug National Parks ...on Foot**

by Anthony Dunk (Envirobooks, 2001, RRP \$12.95).

The title of this book does not describe its contents quite accurately: the book also covers Popran National Park. Many of the 25 or so day walks that are included would not be very familiar even to experienced, Sydney-based bushwalkers. This very welcome volume provides interesting track descriptions, often in the context of Aboriginal or early European settlement history. The book also contains suggestions for extended trips. Each description has photographs and a sketch map. There is a great deal to tempt the walker in this volume. Recommended.

*DN*

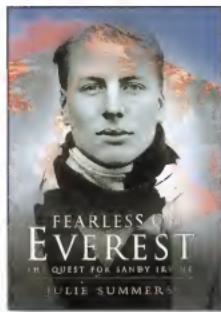
### **Fearless on Everest**

by Julie Summers (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2000, hard cover) \$59.95.

This book is an in-depth account of the short life of Andrew 'Sandy' Irvine, who died aged 22 on Mt Everest with George Mallory in 1924. Written by Irvine's great niece, it explores his background, the early history of exploration at Mt Everest, and the expedition in 1924.

The author attempts to explain why Irvine, an inexperienced climber and the youngest member of the 1924 Everest climbing party, was invited both to join the expedition and to make a bid for the sum-

mit with Mallory, who was regarded as one of the strongest alpinists at the time. Irvine was considered to be 'the best of all the new [1924] recruits'; he was strong and athletic,



he showed mechanical ingenuity and qualities such as resilience and good humour.

In her effort to get inside Irvine's head, Summers draws upon a wide range of material, some of which was unearthed as recently as 1999.

This is a well-researched, generously illustrated and sensitively written book, which would be of interest even to armchair mountaineers.

*NP*

### **Hume and Hovell Walking Track**

by Harry Hill (Land & Property Information, Bathurst, and New South Wales Department of Land & Water Conservation, Wagga Wagga, 2000, RRP \$22).

This is a set of six useful 1:100 000 strip maps that cover the entire length of the Hume and Hovell Walking Track from Cooma to Albury. On the reverse of the maps are excellent notes that not only describe the track but also give historical and other information. The accompanying index map provides an overview of the track and suggests shorter walks. A very useful resource.

*DN*

Publications for possible review are welcome. Send them to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.

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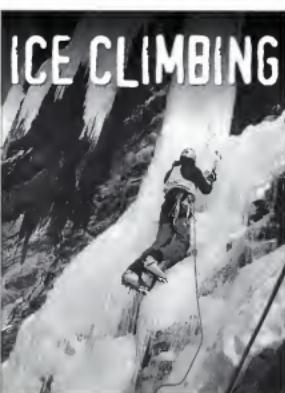
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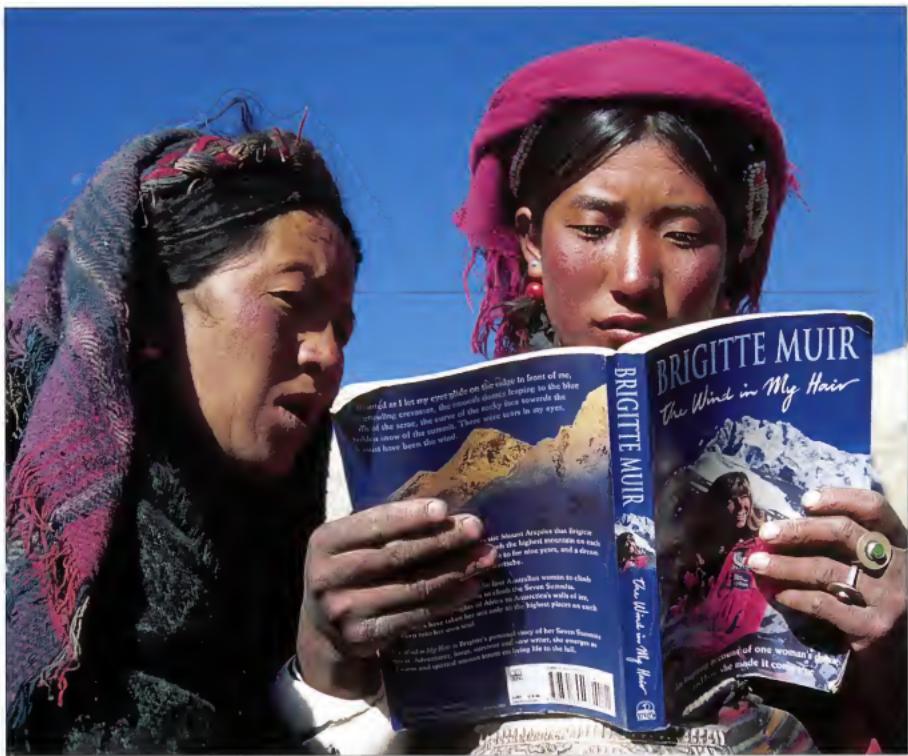


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